CHINESE LITERATURE

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Front Cover: Woodcut by Li Chun

CONTENTS

POEMS — MAO TSE-TUNG 3
The Immortals 4
Farewell to the God of Plague

STORIES 6
Stubborn Ox Niu — *Liu Shu-teh* 26
The Chairman's Hair — *Shen Yao-chung* 32
Maples — *Ho Ku-yen*

SELECTIONS FROM THE CLASSICS 43
The Peony Pavilion (an excerpt) — *Tang Hsien-tsu*
Tang Hsien-tsu, Great Sixteenth Century Dramatist — *Wang Chi-ssu* 90

FOLK TALES OF THE BOXERS UPRISING 96
The Iron Man 105
Tsung Lao-lu 108
The Fisherboy

FROM THE WRITERS' NOTEBOOKS 116
What Makes Me Write — *Tu Peng-cheng* 124
Sanpien and Yumen to Me — *Li Chi*

NOTES ON LITERATURE AND ART
New Developments in the Traditional Chinese Theatre — *Kuo Han-cheng* 127

BOOK REVIEW 140
With Chairman Mao — *Chen Mo*

CHRONICLE

PLATES
Eternal Spring — *Chen Hsiao-nan*
Photographs from the Third National Exhibition of Photographic Art

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MAO TSE-TUNG

POEMS

Here we are publishing three recent poems by Chairman Mao Tse-tung. "The Immortals," written for Comrade Li Shu-yi, a middle-school teacher in Changsha, Hunan, on May 11, 1957, was first published in the January issue of *Poetry* in 1958. The two poems entitled "Farewell to the God of Plague" were first published in *Renmin Ribao* (People's Daily) on October 3, 1958.

THE IMMORTALS[1]

Written for *Li Shu-yi*

I lost my proud Poplar, and you your Willow;[2]
Poplar and Willow soar to the heaven of heavens;
Wu Kang,[3] asked what he has to offer,
Presents them with cassia wine.

The lonely goddess in the moon spreads her ample sleeves
To dance for these good souls in the endless sky;
Of a sudden comes word of the Tiger's defeat on earth,[4]
And for joy they break into tears of torrential rain.

FAREWELL TO THE GOD OF PLAGUE[5]

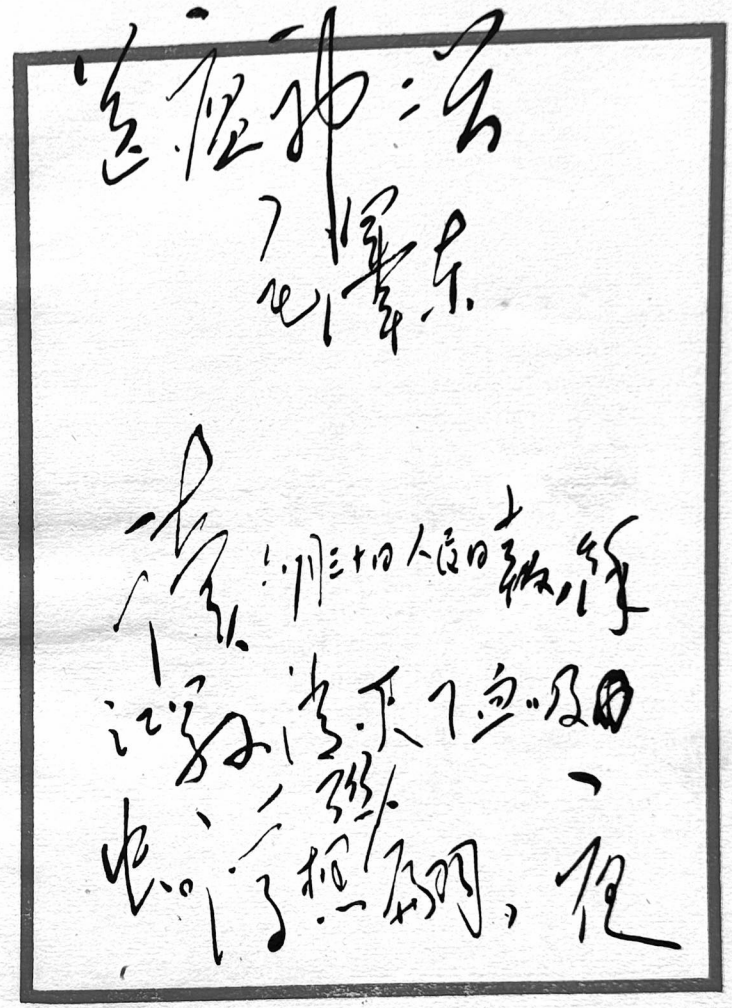
After reading in the *Renmin Ribao* of June 30, 1958, of how schistosomiasis was wiped out in Yukiang County, so many fancies crossed my mind that I could not sleep. In the warm morning breeze, as sunlight fell on my window, I looked towards the distant southern sky and in my happiness wrote the following lines.

— the author

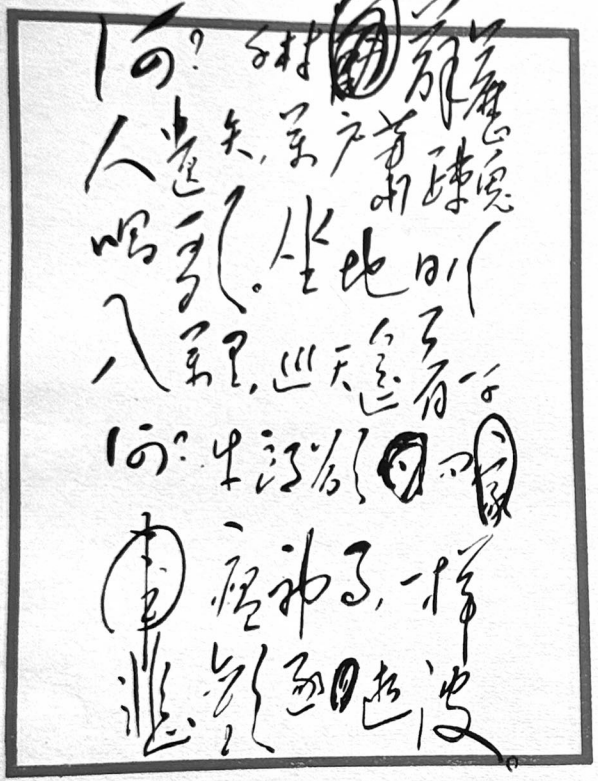
Green streams, blue hills – but all to what avail?
This tiny germ left even Hua To[6] powerless;
Weeds choked hundreds of villages, men wasted away;
Thousands of households dwindled, phantoms sang with glee.
On earth I travel eighty thousand *li* a day,[7]
Ranging the sky I see a myriad rivers.
Should the Cowherd[8] ask tidings of the God of Plague,
Say: past joys and woe have vanished with the waves.

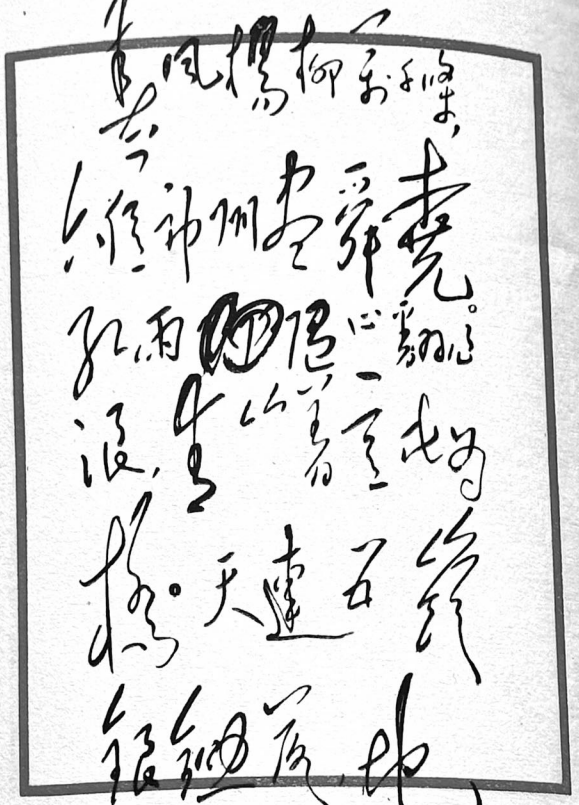
The spring wind blows amid ten thousand willow branches,
Six hundred million in this Sacred Land all equal Yao and Shun.[9]
Flowers falling like crimson rain swirl in waves at will.
Green mountains turn to bridges at our wish;
Gleaming mattocks fall on heaven-high peaks;
Mighty arms move rivers, rock the earth.
We ask the God of Plague: "Where are you bound?"
Paper barges aflame and candle-light illuminate the sky.[10]

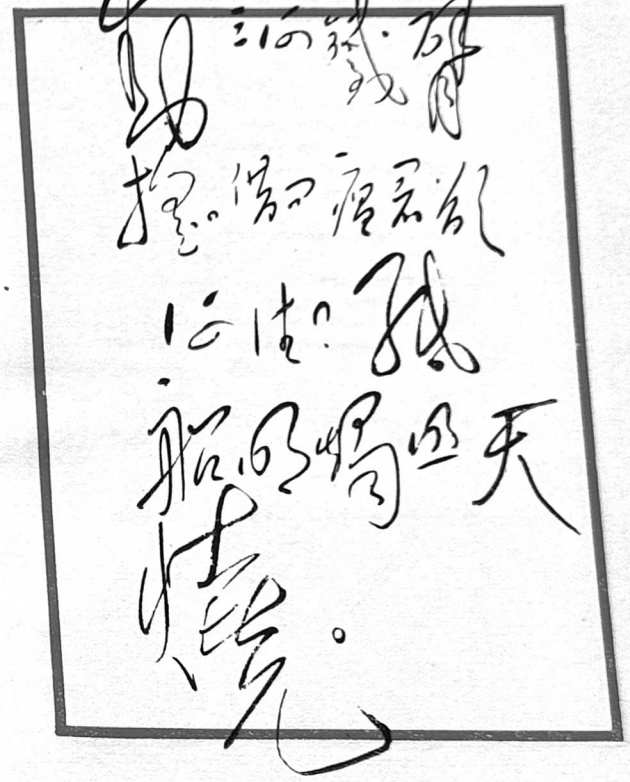
Translated by Gladys Yang

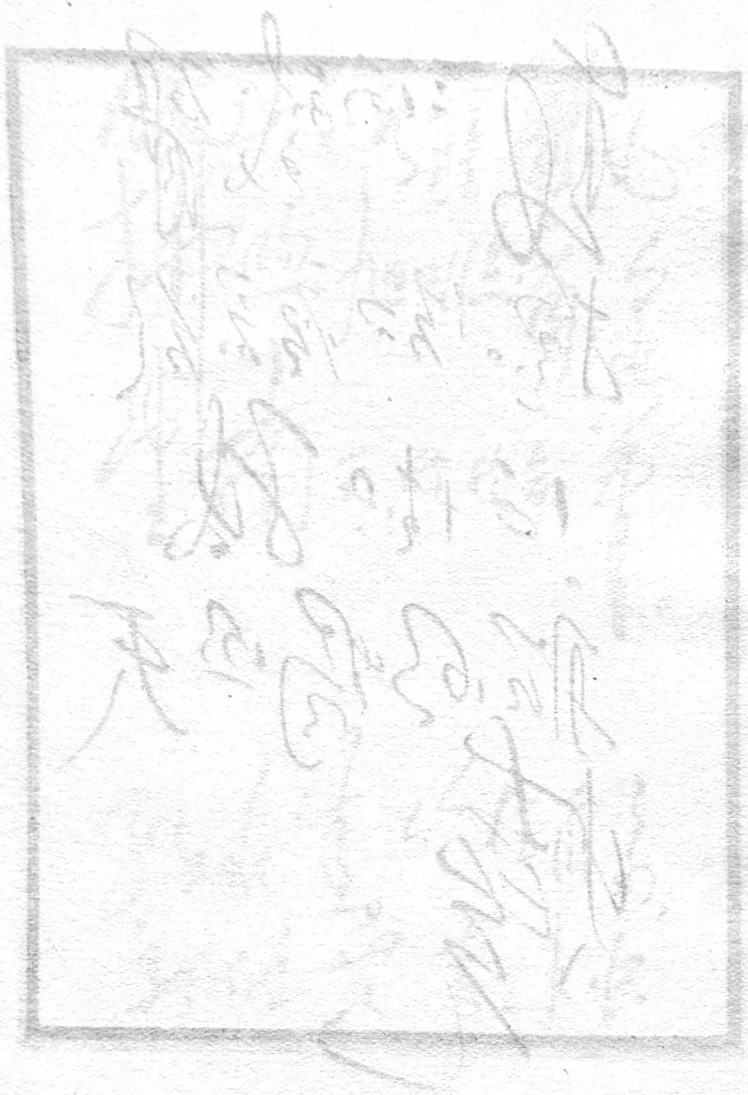


Original manuscript of *Farewell to the God of Plague*→









[1] In connection with this poem, the author wrote to Li Shu-yi: "I am sending you a poem describing an imaginary journey to heaven. This is different from ancient poems in this style, for the author himself is not the traveller; but similar cases can be found in poems about the Cowherd and Weaving Maid. . . ." This poem follows the rhythm and rhyming scheme of *Tieh Lien Hua*, a melody dating from the Tang dynasty.

[2] "Poplar" refers to Yang Kai-hui, for the character *yang* means "poplar." The author's comrade-in-arms, Yang Kai-hui was killed by the warlord Ho Chien when the Red Army withdrew from Changsha in 1930. "Willow" refers to Liu Chih-hsun, for *liu* means "willow." Liu was Li Shu-yi's husband and the author's old friend, who took an active part in the famous Nanchang Uprising and fell in the Battle of Hunghu in Hupeh in September 1933.

[3] A mythological figure who committed crimes during his search for immortality and was therefore condemned to the task of cutting down the cassia tree in the moon.

[4] This refers to the victory of the Chinese people's revolution. The "Tiger" stands for Chinese and foreign forces of reaction.

[5] Written in the *lu shih* form which consists of eight lines. Consequently this is regarded as two poems. Schistosomiasis, a wide-spread disease in some parts of the Yangtse Valley and South China before the liberation, was considered a kind of plague, hence the reference to the God of Plague.

[6] A great physician of the Three Kingdoms Period.

[7] Referring to the rotation of the earth.

[8] According to Chinese mythology the Milky Way is a celestial river where a cowherd lives. By association, the Cowherd here also refers to the Chinese peasants.

[9] Two ancient sage kings.

[10] Burning paper barges and candles was a traditional rite for sending off spirits.

Stories

LIU SHU-TEH

Stubborn Ox Niu

Look there, coming around the mountain! Isn't that old Stubborn Ox Niu who insisted on moving away from Dry Gulch? In the past three days, he's been to our commune three times. What can he be up to?

A shadowy figure on the mountain path winding through the trees, he came into sharper focus as he drew nearer. Tall and thin, dressed completely in black, his face a deep bronze colour, he was a peasant in his fifties, with tousled hair, and burning eyes flashing beneath heavy brows. He appeared agitated; his brows were tightly knit.

Liu Shu-teh, novelist, is vice-chairman of the Kunming Branch of the Chinese Writers' Union.

We have a saying, "An old lady walks with her head up, and an old man keeps his down." That was certainly the case with this old peasant, did you notice? Leaning slightly forward, head down, he kept his eyes on the path ahead, as if afraid that he might stumble. But he looked like the kind of fellow who kept going until he reached his destination.

His name was Niu Chin-chin. In the old society, he had always been desperately poor. As a young man he had been a lively comical fellow who sang with gusto arias from the local operas. They say his wife used to join him in duets. But after this carefree young man assumed the burdens of married life and worked as a tenant farmer for a few years, he stopped singing. Ten more years of tenant farming, and he turned irritable and stubborn.

One autumn, they had a bad harvest. Niu didn't even gather enough rice to feed his family through the winter. The landlord kept coming around for the rent. At first Niu explained and pleaded for an abatement. Then he began to stiffen.

"With soil like this, you couldn't bring in a good harvest?" scoffed the landlord. "Who can believe that!"

"With a fine concubine like yours, you couldn't produce a son?" retorted Niu. "Who can believe that!"

"I'll send you up to the county, you lout! You'll sit in gaol!"

"I was worried what I was going to do about food. In gaol at least I won't starve. Please get me committed quickly!"

"Impudent wretch! Is there nothing you fear on earth or above?"

"Even death doesn't scare me, Your Honour. Set your mind at ease!"

"You can't be budged by fire or water, you . . . you stubborn ox!"

"Thanks, Your Honour, for giving me that nickname," said Niu, bowing deeply.

When bluster couldn't frighten him, the landlord took harsher measures. He sent a gang to beat Niu up. Though bleeding and exhausted, Niu wouldn't beg for mercy. One soft word out of him might have made the gang let up a bit. But a sign of weakness from Niu – try and get it!

Having his harvests snatched by landlords year after year, Stubborn Ox Niu moved from village to village. He finally settled down for good in Dry Gulch. High and arid and with poor soil, Dry Gulch raised wet rice, although the sole source of water was the rain that fell from the sky. Only a man with the strength and stubbornness of an ox could stick it out there. Because local rents were slightly lower and it was possible to scrape through a year if you were lucky enough to get an early rainfall, Stubborn Ox Niu became the tenant of one of the nephews of the man whose "concubine . . . couldn't produce a son."

Niu, his wife and their half-grown son worked day and night, turning the ground into neat paddy fields. They ploughed deep and applied plenty of fertilizer. But because there was no rain in early spring, the rice shoots were transplanted late, and the yield was poor. Although rainfall may have been irregular, the landlord never failed to call for his rent on time. He arrived as soon as the rice was gathered.

"When will you deliver my share of the harvest?"

"There isn't enough here for us to eat. We'll talk about the rent later."

"What tricks are you up to?"

"None. This is all the rice there is. You can look at it, but you can't take it."

"You're talking as if the land belonged to you!"

"It isn't mine, but I've worked it for you a couple of years. If you take our food away, you can till the land yourself!"

The landlord looked at Niu and he looked at the cleanly gleaned fields. He knew that Niu loved the soil and that he'd never get another tenant like him.

"All right then. See what you can do."

"If you're leaving it up to me, I'm going to fill my family's bellies first."

"You can't be budged by fire or water, you stubborn ox!"

After liberation, Stubborn Ox retained his nickname, but he gave no displays of his well-known trait. He showed so much initiative during the land reform that the comrade in charge of the land reform team was thinking of introducing him into membership in the Communist Party. But Niu wouldn't agree. "I've got the wrong temperament for a Communist," he said. "I'm too obstinate.

When another fellow makes a mistake, he can admit it. But not me. Even when I know I'm wrong, and I feel so upset I could cry, I can't get myself to say it. That sort of Communist would only be a burden to the Party. Let's wait until I've improved myself."

Life became steadily better. Niu had no big worries, he was happy. In the ten years following liberation he gave vent to his stubbornness only twice.

Niu was a man who could break but wouldn't bend. He would never admit defeat, never bow his head to poverty and hardship, never speak meekly to the rich. When the reactionaries beat him viciously, he didn't plead for mercy. When his family was starving, he wouldn't go out to beg for food. Straightforward, sincere, generous, he never took the smallest advantage of any man.

When the elementary farming co-ops were formed, he joined with his share of land. He also took part in the higher type of co-ops when they were organized. In 1957, when a few members of the co-op alleged that they weren't getting enough grain, his stubborn streak flared up again.

Hsieh Lin, the vice-chairman of the co-op (he was later discovered to be a rightist), was inciting the members to demand a larger share of the grain harvest. At a meeting of the entire co-op, Wang Chang-hai, formerly a well-to-do middle peasant, brought a jug of pickled vegetables and set it down in the centre of the township government courtyard where the meeting was being held. Wang's wife wept and said that was all they had left to eat. A few people followed their lead and bemoaned their own "hardships."

A pall seemed to settle over the gathering. After the moaners had finished their plaints, Hsieh Lin turned to Niu and asked: "How much grain is your family short?"

His eyes bulging with suppressed rage, Niu pushed his way through the crowd and took his stand beside the jug of pickled vegetables.

"My family has enough to eat," he said. "We're not short of anything!"

"Oho, he's going to get obstinate again," people whispered.

"That's strange! Everybody else is short of grain, but your family — "

Niu didn't let him finish. Scowling, he cut in, "What's strange about it? If we're not short, we're not short! In this co-op, we're drawing four hundred catties per person. Everyone agreed to it. But some people are eating four meals a day and having another snack before going to bed! Some are selling grain to buy wine! That's why some people are short of grain. And you're a fine vice-chairman, Hsieh Lin! You don't investigate to see whether anyone's really short. You just take it for granted and want to know how much! All I can say is – you're barking up the wrong tree!"

Turning, with one kick he sent the jug rolling across the yard.

Hsieh Lin shook his finger at him and yelled, "You're trying to break up the meeting! You're preventing democratic discussion! Comrades! Are we going to let him get away with that?"

But none of the peasants rose to the vice-chairman's bait. In the silence that followed, Stubborn Ox angrily stamped out.

The next evening, he again attended the meeting. Hsieh Lin demanded that he publicly criticize himself. A handful of peasants (those who had been alleging that they were short of grain) sided with the vice-chairman. Frightened and weeping, Niu's wife tried to pull him back into the crowd, but he pushed forward and strode to the foot of the speaker's platform. Pointing at the vice-chairman, he shouted:

"So you want me to criticize myself, do you? Let me tell you, Hsieh Lin – you've picked the wrong man! I never gave in to the reactionaries, and now that the people have taken power, I certainly won't give in to bad behaviour! If I ever criticize myself, it won't be before you! In the future we'll see which one of us has to make the self-criticism!"

Standing off to one side, Niu's wife was trembling with fear. If her son, Niu Hsin, had raised such a row, she would have promptly slapped him. But what could she do with this obstinate old man?

Finally, she succeeded in dragging him from the meeting place.

The third night, he went again. People struggle for justice like a fish fights for water. Stubborn Ox wasn't the man to run from a battle. This time, he found the atmosphere quite different. Presiding over the meeting was the vice-secretary of the county Party committee. Looking very pale and deflated, Hsieh Lin sat

with his head down, as if afraid to face anyone. The peasants who had made such a squawk about the grain two days before, now, also much subdued, hid themselves in the rear.

Speaking at the meeting this evening were people of a different type. They spoke truthfully and to the point, and every one of them mentioned him – Stubborn Ox Niu. They all said his view was correct.

The final opinion of the majority was – no shortage of grain.

The second time the old man got obstinate was after the Big Leap began in the countryside.

Stubborn Ox had a rich store of farming experience. But working all his life on poor soil, he had never had a chance to develop his talent fully, and this made him unhappy. Whenever he heard about other production brigades increasing their output, his whole body would burn. But try as he might, tilling the arid ground of Dry Gulch, he could never catch up.

In 1958, when the Big Leap began, a production goal was set of one thousand catties per *mou*. Old Niu thought and thought, and came to the conclusion that even if he worked himself to death, he couldn't squeeze a thousand catties out of a *mou* of Dry Gulch land. After struggling mentally for several days, he said to his son:

"We can't live here any longer. This soil is dead. No matter how you strive, it's all in vain."

His son was startled. "What do you want to do?"

"Actually, a thousand catties isn't much. But you can't get it here. If we can't keep up with the leap, it will be an awful loss of face! I was thinking, we ought to move over to your married sister's co-op. They've got good land, and they're short of people."

"How can we do that? She and we are in two different co-ops. Even if this one is willing to let us go, that one might not necessarily want us."

"They do. I've already asked."

"Suppose our co-op won't release us?"

"If they won't release us, we'll go anyway!"

"You're getting senile, old man," said his wife. "We've been living here twenty-five years. How can you have the heart to leave?"

"Why not! These past few days, there hasn't been enough water to give our ox a decent drink. In another few days, you'll be able to see the bottom of our well. Who wants to stay here!"

He went to see Li Ho-ping, Party secretary of the co-op.

The secretary was on the phone, making notes as he talked. He had bushy hair, a round face, a prominent nose and thick lips. He spoke in a slow unruffled manner.

"Ah, Uncle Niu. Not busy today?" the Party secretary asked, as he hung up the phone.

"Comrade Li, I have a request. I want to move."

"What? When did you get that idea?"

"Just recently." Niu coughed. "After the Big Leap started."

"Leave our little Dry Gulch? How could you bear it? Do you have any reason?"

"Only one: Dry Gulch has no water. It's impossible to leap forward here." The old man sat down on a stool opposite the secretary.

"We're planning to build a reservoir in the mountains. We'll have water here soon."

"Can't be done," the old man said positively. "It can't be done."

"Why not?"

"One co-op doesn't have enough manpower to undertake such a big project. Even if we could, we'd be spending an enormous sum to irrigate a small piece of ground. Anyhow, there are no springs in these mountains. The reservoir would be empty; we'd be a laughing stock. . . . I'm fifty-three, but I've never had a year when everything went well on the land I was working. I'm getting on in years, and now we're having a Big Leap. I want to try some place else, some place where I can concentrate everything on raising a good crop. What's wrong with that?"

"Uncle, you're just making excuses for yourself."

"Am I? All I know is that even a god won't get a bumper rice harvest out of this ground! Ah, Comrade Secretary, that thousand catty target makes my mouth water. But when I look at our Dry Gulch land, all the strength goes out of me!" Stubborn Ox spread his hands and sighed.

"Where are you thinking of moving?"

"To my daughter's place. Their land is near a lake. If we use our heads, we'll harvest fifteen hundred to two thousand catties per *mou*, easy!" He clenched his fists so tightly that his fingers cracked.

"But somebody has to till Dry Gulch too." Comrade Li's calm voice quickened a bit.

"Whoever wants to till it can go ahead! Not me! For twenty-five years I was ready to irrigate this land with my own spit — if that would have done any good. It's not easy for me to leave here, Comrade Secretary. . . ." There was a quaver in the old man's voice.

"You mustn't go. They're a co-op and so are we. If you leave, it will mean we'll be losing three able-bodied members! You mustn't go!"

"I only want to raise output. I don't care which co-op I do it in," Stubborn Ox retorted, his breath whistling through his nostrils — a sure sign he was working himself up. "Wherever I am, I work for a living. No one has to support me!"

Seeing that the old man was losing his temper, Comrade Li swallowed back his third "you mustn't go." He knew that once Niu decided to do anything, nine oxen and two tigers couldn't drag him back. The Party secretary thought that if he could delay him until after the spring planting, when the new production measures would be announced, perhaps he might change his mind.

"Moving to another co-op is an important step," he said. "We have to talk this over with your son. Unless he agrees, we won't be able to give our consent to your whole family leaving."

Niu Hsin was Niu's only son, and the old man loved him dearly. A Youth Leaguer, leader of a production team, the boy had been born and raised in Dry Gulch. He wouldn't want to go. If the son refused to move, who could tell — maybe the old man could be persuaded to stay.

"You want Niu Hsin to agree? That will be easy, very easy!" Niu rose to his feet. "Secretary Li, we're men of our word. Let's get this settled quickly. If Niu Hsin agrees, then we go. You've given your promise."

Comrade Li saw him to the door and watched the old man walk off, his head down. The Party secretary felt badly. "Why

does he want to move to another co-op?" he wondered. If it were anyone else, Li wouldn't have been so upset. The old man not only was a good honest person with determination and courage, he had a kind of ingrained loyalty to the Party and the cause of socialism. Usually a silent man, if anything concerning the Party or socialism was involved, he would rise and speak out fearlessly, criticizing anyone he thought wrong, regardless of position or rank. He had no formal understanding of political analysis or practice; he acted entirely on the basis of his class instincts. A true down-to-earth former poor peasant — how could the Party secretary let him go? Of course, old Niu knew nothing of what was going on in Comrade Li's mind.

Although Dry Gulch was arid and its productivity low, ever since the formation of the co-op old Niu had always been a model farmer. He was in his glory when enthusiastically toiling in the fields. In half a lifetime of scrabbling in the poor soil of Dry Gulch, he had come to understand it thoroughly. When to plough and plant, how to select seeds, dig irrigation ditches, control insect pests, fight drought, prevent floods, improve the soil — he had learned these things from his own personal experience. In the past few years, at every spring planting, at every autumn harvest, Comrade Li had sought his advice, treasuring him as a virtual living encyclopedia of agricultural lore. From the bottom of his heart he didn't want to let him go. Old Niu didn't know this either.

Leaving the township government office, the old man felt that matters were proceeding with unexpected smoothness. He hurried back to Dry Gulch and told his son what had happened.

"The Party secretary agrees?" exclaimed Niu Hsin. "That's mighty peculiar." Perplexed, he rubbed the soft young beard on his chin.

"What's peculiar about it? I haven't asked to turn bandit!"

"But why do you want to move? Ma won't want to leave either. We'd better have a family chat." Niu Hsin wanted to shift the burden of making the decision to his mother.

"She's already agreed. If you don't believe me, ask her."

The old lady knew it was hopeless to convince Stubborn Ox to change his mind. Besides, she was happy at the prospect of

living in the same village with her daughter. She sided with her husband.

Very pleased, the old man rose early the next morning and began repairing the family ox cart, sawing and hammering, making the little courtyard ring. But his son was nowhere to be seen.

"You've gone into hiding, eh? All right, I'll look for you!" he said to himself. Tossing his axe on the cart with a clang, he strode out of the compound and headed directly for the fields. Not long after, Secretary Li, emerging from his office, saw old Niu pulling Niu Hsin down the street. They were coming in his direction. Father and son were arguing loudly.

"So you won't come, you young wretch!" the old man was shouting. Niu Hsin, his face red with anger and embarrassment, didn't want to oppose his father in public.

"*Tieh*,"* he said, "let me go, let me go! We're making a show of ourselves!"

"If I let you go, you'll run off again!"

Behind the struggling pair came Mama, clucking and complaining like a mother hen. Grinning villagers gathered around. Some pointed and said:

"Look, old Stubborn Ox has gone obstinate again!"

Dragging the boy up to Comrade Li, the old man released him and cried: "Party secretary, here he is. Please ask him what he wants to do."

Comrade Li didn't know whether to laugh or cry. Since things had come to such a pass, there was no point in trying to compel the old man to remain.

"All right, I consent to you and your family moving," he said with a sigh. "But you may regret it some day, old uncle. Leaving is easy, but it's hard to return. When you're sorry, it will be too late."

"I'll never be sorry, never! I'm leaving because I want to, of my own free will." Pleased and smiling, old Niu said, "A real man does a thing thoroughly or not at all. I'll never want to come back! But I'll never forget you folks or little Dry Gulch either!" He wagged his head, and his face was tinged with sorrow.

"Don't move, then. Ah, we hate to part with you!"

"Impossible! My bow is already drawn."

* Father.

"You can't be budged by fire or water! You certainly are an old stubborn ox!" Comrade Li cried, shaking his finger under the old man's nose. It was the first time he had ever used the appellation.

Old Niu chuckled. "That was the name the landlord gave me!... Swear away. You know I won't get angry with you."

The following morning — it was the tenth day of the first lunar month in 1958 — old Niu and his family departed from Dry Gulch.

The co-op loaned him another ox cart to help him move, and his son-in-law arrived with a horse cart. As soon as the horse cart was loaded — with trunks and cupboards covered over with rice straw — the son-in-law, who was an impetuous young fellow, shouted to his horse and trotted off.

Now the ox cart was loaded too. The old couple stood gazing sadly around the empty courtyard. After all, it had been their home for many years. Finally, they said goodbye to the friends and neighbours who had come to see them off. Niu Hsin drove, Mama sat on top of the load, old Niu walked behind. Slowly, they left the village.

Rolling along the embankment between the fields, the cart proceeded towards the pass at the southern end of the gulch. Most of the narrow paddy fields had already been dug out in preparation for the spring planting, and the soil steamed in the sun. In the undug fields were cracks a span wide, like mouths opening to the heavens, begging for water. White stones flashed on the river flats. Along the banks the slim leaves of the straight glistening reeds were motionless in the faint spring breeze, as if enervated by the warmth of the sun. Except for the green cactus plants spotting the slopes, the entire gulch was brown and dry.

At the top of the pass the cart halted to give the ox a breather, and old Niu turned and looked back at the gulch, at his old home amid the trees.

"We're leaving, little gulch," he said. "Over the years, you gave us happiness and you gave us hardship.... We're leaving not because we want to get rich but in order to leap forward. Please forgive us, don't be angry. Birds always fly to the light, don't they? So don't hate us. Let's part on good terms."

Mama Niu was already very depressed. Now, hearing her husband's words, she burst into tears. They had been married for thirty years. Even when they had gone into hiding to avoid the landlord's debt collectors, she had never seen him so downcast.

Young Niu Hsin glanced at his parents, then struck the ox with his stick and shouted at it, walking on blithely as if nothing unusual had happened.

Not long after they moved to the Lucky Co-op, they heard that their old co-op — the Pine Tree — was preparing to build a reservoir next to the gulch. Old Niu was excited, but he couldn't believe it. One co-op didn't have enough manpower to undertake such a big engineering project.

But when the rice sprouts were planted, the news was confirmed. Pine Tree Co-op was really going ahead with it. Old Niu was about to go and see for himself when the county telephoned and asked Lucky Co-op to prepare a field demonstration. Lucky had done a fine job of planting and its sprouts were growing exceptionally well. The authorities wanted other co-ops in the county to learn from their experience.

At the field demonstration, old Niu met Comrade Li. The Party secretary told him they had already stopped work on the reservoir because they were short of men, material and technique. "But we're definitely going to build it," Li assured him. "If not this year, then the next. You'll see."

Old Niu only smiled. But he thought to himself, "Drawing a picture of a griddle cake to distract a child. You're just kidding yourself."

When the grain heads were heavy and drooping, all over the country co-ops began combining into people's communes. Old Niu heard that the work on the reservoir at Dry Gulch had been resumed. At first, it seemed to him that the communes were too large, that they tried to handle too much, that they had been organized too quickly. He was soon going to learn their advantages. If four co-ops hadn't merged into one commune, the Dry Gulch dam wouldn't have been completed by the time he became a grandfather — and Niu Hsin still didn't even have a sweetheart.

Work on the dam started and stopped, started and stopped again, old Niu's heart rising and falling with it. "What would the soil in Dry Gulch be like if it could be irrigated?..." he

wondered. "But that's impossible. There are no streams in those mountains. Just relying on rain water won't do any good. Even if you could accumulate a little water behind a dam, the sun would dry it up before the next spring planting. . . ."

In spite of his doubts, he couldn't get the project out of his mind. Physically, he was in the Lucky Co-op, but his heart was still in Dry Gulch. The dam was his. How could he stand by idly? One day, pretending that he had to go to town, he asked for the day off. Then he headed for his former home.

Following a small path, he climbed the western mountain. He could see the little village nestling among the trees. He intended to detour around it, afraid of meeting old neighbours who might ask, "Have you come back?" But somehow, his steps led him directly to his old house. To his surprise he found it empty, the door sealed. In the courtyard were piles of recently harvested rice. A black dog, lying on the ground, rose and rushed up to him. It sniffed his clothes, then wagged its tail. It didn't bark. "It still recognizes me," old Niu thought. Everything in the compound looked the same, all neat and clean. "Can they be keeping it for me?" old Niu wondered.

In the fields outside the village, the rice had just been cut, and fresh sprouts were rising from the original roots. The whole little river valley was a pale green. He had never seen it look so beautiful. . . . What would it be like with irrigation? . . .

He left the village. Rounding the mountain, he entered the pass, and halted in amazement. The labour forces of all the four former co-ops were swarming over the slopes. Excavated earth flew by on overhead trolleys, on improvised wooden rails; below, ox carts, horse carts, wheelbarrows, baskets on shoulder poles, were in action. People were digging, transporting, singing, laughing, shouting. . . . They were splitting open the mountain, rocks were tumbling, a pall of dust rose to the skies, then rained down on your clothes. . . .

He wound his way through the masses of people, climbed to a rocky ledge on the mountain side and gazed around. He was afraid he would meet an old friend who would say: "See how strong our commune is!"

The next morning, just as Comrade Li was washing his face, Niu Hsin came in. "You're up early," said Comrade Li. "And you've already covered thirty or forty *li*."

"You don't know the half of it! The old man got me out of bed at the crack of dawn. He wants me to tell you two things. First, don't try to turn all the soil before planting the beans. It's too late for that. Turn as much as you can, but the main thing is to get the beans in fast. Where the ground's too dry, you can moisten it a bit. Second, he says your stone masonry work is no good; the way you're doing it, the dam will collapse with the first big mountain torrent. He says he has a friend in Chiangchuan who's a stone-mason. If you want him, he can get him." Niu Hsin pulled out a letter his father had written to the stone-mason and handed it to the Party secretary. It read:

> Big Brother Wu,
>
> I haven't seen or heard from you in three years. Are you still alive? You can't be dead. I'm not dead either. If we didn't die before, this certainly isn't the time to do it. If you're still alive, and not sick, don't get sick whatever you do, I want you to come out to Dry Gulch and give us a hand. You must come. If you don't, I'll curse you. You don't know — we're parched out here! Must close now. Will give you the details when we meet. There are a lot of them. Even in ten full days and nights, I won't be able to tell you the whole story.
>
> Younger Brother Niu

The Party secretary laughed. "What kind of letter is this? Did you write it?"

"My *tieh* dictated it and I wrote it down."

"He's a real friend — no beating about the bush. How does your *tieh* happen to know this fellow?"

"My *tieh* says he met him when he was hiding out from the landlord's debt collector. Wu got sick and *tieh* nursed him back to health, and they became friends. *Tieh* says Wu killed a bully who was oppressing him, and he had to run away, taking his daughter with him. After he recovered, Wu married his daughter

off to a river fisherman in Chiangchuan. He changed his name and became a fisherman himself. He quit being a stone-mason. He used to visit us in Dry Gulch, but he hasn't come around in three years. *Tieh* says if you can't spare anyone, I can go. If Big Brother Wu won't come, I'm to say, 'My *tieh's* sick.' That will get him."

Secretary Li grabbed Niu Hsin's shoulders and rocked him from side to side.

"Your *tieh* hasn't forgotten our Dry Gulch! All right, youngster, go ahead."

"If you get the dam built, I think the old man will be so happy he'll want to come back."

"You mean it?"

The boy laughed. "You know what he's like. If he gets the urge to do something, even a flaming volcano can't stop him."

After breakfast, Niu Hsin set forth. The following evening, he returned with a man in his sixties, thin, with a long beard. When the new-comer learned that old Niu had moved to the Lucky Co-op, he was furious.

"He drags me all the way out here after he's already moved away! I never thought he'd pull such a dirty trick, the old scoundrel!" raged the visitor. "Niu Hsin, I blame you for this, too! Why didn't you tell me you've left Dry Gulch?"

"I was afraid you wouldn't come," the boy replied honestly.

"In the old days, a whole county couldn't build a dam. Today, our one commune is going to build one," said Secretary Li. "In the old days, you wanted to be a stone-mason, but they wouldn't let you. Today, we're inviting you to be our chief stone worker. Please, old uncle, help us out."

The old man was very moved. Stroking his beard, he thought a moment. Then he replied:

"There's reason in what you say. I'll do it. But I don't look the least like a worker in this long beard. It's a hangover from the days when I was hiding out. Well then, off it goes!"

He had Comrade Li shave him clean.

The old man was indeed an excellent stone-mason. Although he had not worked at his trade for many years and his hands trembled a little and he wasn't as strong as he used to be, he shaped stone blocks quickly and well. As he worked, he trained

apprentices. By the time the job was done he had trained nineteen young stone-masons for the Pine Tree Commune.

Behind the mountain east of the dam ran a small clear stream. Since Dry Gulch had no water, why not cut a tunnel through the mountain and lead the stream into the reservoir? With the old craftsman clambering over the cliffs and selecting the most suitable spot, a tunnel was soon bored through.

After the reservoir was completed, old Niu invited Big Brother Wu to his home, and the two old friends drank together. "Here's to you, big brother," said Stubborn Ox. "I thank you on behalf of the Pine Tree Commune."

Old Wu drained his cup and thumped it down on the table. "You're a member of the Lucky Commune," he shouted. "What right have you to speak for Pine Tree?"

"Don't ask, old rascal! I must confess," Stubborn Ox groaned. "I still think of myself as belonging to the Pine Tree Commune!"

"Aha, you wretch! Aren't you full of nasty schemes!"

As they were drinking, a man came to invite old Wu to the county Party committee. Old Niu rode with them in the jeep as far as the office of the Pine Tree Commune. After they dropped him off, he went in to see Secretary Li. This was January 15, 1959.

"I've come to ask you a favour," said old Niu as he entered the door. "I want to move back to Dry Gulch."

"What's that you say?" Comrade Li feigned deafness.

"I said I want to move back to Dry Gulch," Stubborn Ox shouted, his face red.

"Don't you remember what I told you when you were moving away, old uncle? Working in a commune isn't like paying social calls, coming and going as you please." Comrade Li tweaked his eyebrow hard to keep himself from laughing.

"What are you talking about? This has nothing to do with social calls! I made a mistake, that's true. But no one has eyes in the back of his head. You know very well: Every man makes mistakes, unless he's a god; every horse makes mistakes, unless it's a dragon. Chairman Mao says we ought to forgive a man who takes the wrong road if he's willing to turn back. Let me return to Dry Gulch and I promise to produce not one thousand catties per

mou but twelve hundred. What do you say? I'll give you a written guarantee!"

This was exactly what Comrade Li had been hoping for, but he didn't agree at once. After he let old Stubborn Ox leave Dry Gulch, the Party secretary had regretted his action each time they met — at the Lucky Co-op field demonstration, at the farming awards meeting held by the county Party committee. But he wanted to take this opportunity to cure the old man of his irresponsibility.

"You have to get permission in writing from the Lucky Commune," he said. "If they agree, we can consider it. If they don't, it would create bad feeling between the two communes if we took you back."

Old Stubborn Ox was rather doubtful, and not at all happy, but he couldn't refuse. Without Comrade Li's consent, you might be able to force your way out, but you certainly couldn't force your way back!

"How official we're getting!" he snorted.

He hurried back to the Lucky Commune. Secretary Chang's reply was the same as Comrade Li's:

"If you want to move back, first get permission from Pine Tree." Of course, Lucky Commune wasn't willing to let him go.

"Ha! How official we're getting!"

The next day, he again hastened to the Pine Tree Commune. The result was still — "How official we're getting!"

In three days, he shuttled back and forth between the two communes three times. Agitated, depressed, he had a bellyful of anger to which he didn't dare give vent. The third time he arrived at the Pine Tree Commune, the moment he saw Secretary Li, he shouted:

"I can't stand any more of this! Do you want me to hang myself!" He yanked off his hat and mopped his perspiring head. Wearily he sank down on a bench and sat drooping, like a miserable child.

"All right. Never mind the letter of permission. But you'll have to criticize yourself before the members."

Old Stubborn Ox leaped up as if he had been stabbed, gazing at the secretary in the utmost surprise. Then, flinging his hand

down in a haughty gesture of rejection, he stalked out without a word.

But early the next morning, Niu Hsin arrived, chuckling. "The old man insists that I explain to you. He says he doesn't know how to make a self-criticism."

"Go back and tell him that unless he criticizes himself, the members won't accept him into the commune. Not only must he criticize himself — he has to do it thoroughly."

On January 20, Pine Tree held a meeting of all its members to discuss measures for a big leap in the 1959 spring planting. Sure enough, old Stubborn Ox showed up. When he saw Comrade Li, he pulled him outside the compound gate and whispered:

"Don't make me go through with this. I'll only talk about coming back. If I have to criticize myself for having left, it will be like a young girl trying to act as marriage broker — I won't be able to open my mouth!"

"You *are* a nuisance. Why all this bargaining over a simple self-criticism? Aren't leaving and returning both part of the same thing? If you hadn't moved away, would you have to ask permission to come back?"

"Why, that's right! Right, of course you're right! In that case, I'll have to prepare carefully."

Old Stubborn Ox paced outside the compound gate, cursing himself for having left, blaming his wife and son for not having stopped him. Once or twice, he thought of going home, but he knew that if he ran off now it would only be to return again. . . . Then he got a brilliant idea. He thought of a way to criticize himself that was easy, yet novel, and which would, perhaps, be effective with his peasant auditors.

The discussion had finished and the meeting had quieted down when old Niu entered. Comrade Li addressed the members. He said that Niu Chin-chin had requested to return to Dry Gulch. The Party committee thought he should criticize himself. If he did it well, and the members agreed, he would be permitted to come back.

"Uncle Niu, you can begin."

Comrade Li withdrew and Stubborn Ox came forward. His arms wrapped around his chest, his eyes on his feet, he turned awkwardly this way and that. Raising his head, he stammered:

"Neighbours, I was wrong. I shouldn't have left Dry Gulch. I ask that you let me come back – not as a social caller, but to work together with you all. Among the old operas there's one called 'The Prodigal Son Returns.' I am your prodigal son. But a prodigal son comes home because he wants to mend his ways. You ought to accept him. When I was young, I used to like to sing. Before I criticize myself, I want to sing a clapper ballad:

"Fifty-five this year,
Is old Niu called Chin-chin.
He wanted to leap forward,
But got his head in a dizzy spin.

"Dry Gulch is no good said he,
Its fields are always dry.
Ignoring the secretary's urging,
He packed up and off did fly.

"No faith in the strength of the communes,
No faith in the people's vim.
No dam could be built in Dry Gulch,
That's how it seemed to him.

Eternal Spring Woodcut by Chen Hsiao-nan→

The artist is now teaching in the Central Institute of Fine Arts. The tree in this woodcut is a gingko tree which lives to very great age; so here it has a symbolic meaning. This woodcut was made last year in celebration of the tenth anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China.

"Oh, I couldn't see the truth,
Though right before my eyes.
I'm longing now to come home,
I must apologize.

"Yes, I made a mistake,
Old neighbours forgive.
Please let me return,
To Dry Gulch and live.

"I'll listen to the Party,
I'll work with might and main,
And never let my stubbornness
Run away with me again!"

That old Stubborn Ox was willing to criticize himself was already remarkable enough. But to self-criticize in verse — that was piling wonder upon wonder. His listeners rocked with laughter. They cried:

"Good! Excellent!"

"You needn't criticize yourself any further!"

"Come on back! You're welcome!"

"We'll help you move!"

As old Stubborn Ox came down the western slope once more, his family's belongings were piled on three ox carts. Mama Niu rode on the last one. Old Niu walked behind in the rear. As they rolled through the pass, the old man halted.

"Little Dry Gulch, we've come back," he said. "I owe you an apology — but I've already criticized myself."

Mama Niu didn't cry this time. She laughed.

Translated by Sidney Shapiro
Illustration by Chao Chih-fang

SHEN YAO-CHUNG

The Chairman's Hair

The chairman of our commune has a good head of hair. The only reason I mention it is because it frequently led to amusing complications.

As a matter of fact, our chairman's hair shouldn't have created any problems. He doesn't part it or comb it in a pompadour, but simply shaves it off whenever it gets too long. Since this is a very simple process, complications should not have arisen. The trouble is, however, that simple things sometimes become quite complicated when they happen to certain people. Our chairman's hair is a case in point.

What would usually happen was this. The chairman would be engrossed in his work as usual when someone would remark, "There's enough there for a nice rope." Only then would the chairman realize that his hair had grown too long. His first thought would be he had had a hair-cut only the day before. It was very annoying that his hair should insist on growing so fast.

But since it had grown, he would have to get someone to shave it for him. He never went to the barber shop in town; he couldn't spare that much time waiting for his turn. So he would get hold of some friend and ask, "Uncle Chang, when can you shave my head for me?"

"Any time you like."

"Lunch time tomorrow then."

Shen Yao-chung is a young peasant writer.

The next day Uncle Chang would arrive at his house at noon, but he would not be home. After waiting in vain for some time, Uncle Chang would go away. Uncle Chang would run into the chairman later in the day and say, "I came to your house at noon. Why weren't you home?"

"Er . . . ah, so sorry. I got tied up in the office. It was way past noon when I returned. What about tomorrow at noon? Please, may I trouble you to come again?" The chairman would apologize so profusely that Uncle Chang would promise to come again.

But when Chang would arrive as agreed, the chairman would probably be lying in bed. "Oh, I'm so sorry, Uncle Chang. Last night I came back from the district at cocks' crow. I could hardly keep my eyes open when I was drawing up production plans this morning. My hair isn't really long enough. There's no reason to shave it. Got to catch a nap now or I'll be sunk this afternoon. . . ."

Uncle Chang would cut him short. "Never mind. I know you're busy. We'll make it some other time."

Uncle Chang might waste two noon hours, but the chairman's hair would continue to grow. He would mean to ask the good man to come again, but he couldn't be sure when he would be free long enough to sit down for the hair-cut. He wouldn't have the courage to make another appointment which he might have to break.

And so his hair would go on growing silently and the question of shaving his head would remain, until one day the chairman would tell himself, "I know. Uncle Li also knows how to shave heads. I'll get him." Then he would start making appointments with Uncle Li. After breaking a number of them in the way I've just described, he would at last manage to get his hair shaved clean.

And so every time he had a hair-cut, the process would involve a number of appointments made and broken, postponements and delays. This was how our chairman dealt with the question of his hair in the past.

But that was before the big leap forward in production. After that, there was much more work to be done in the commune. One important matter after another had to be discussed. The little question of hair had no place whatsoever in the priority list of key problems. Besides, all the members of the commune were working so hard the chairman didn't have the heart to bother them when they had a little leisure. Rather than that he would let his hair grow as tall as a house.

So his hair continued to sprout, sticking up into the air higher than ever. His wife got really worried.

"What's to be done?" she asked in dismay.

"You mean my hair?" asked the chairman. "What of it? You don't have to feed it or water it, just let it grow."

"You're getting to look like a madman. How high are you going to let it grow?" Unconsciously, she raised her voice.

"Growing high, is it? Well, all our production targets are rising and if my hair rises high too, it's also a kind of leap forward."

"Nonsense. If you don't get it shaved soon, I'm going to shave it off myself." She meant it as a threat.

"If only you know how."

"I'll really do it, if you're not afraid of being scraped."

"Oh, that's all right. If you're willing to try, I don't mind if it hurts a bit in the beginning. Once you've learned you can always shave my head at home. It'll make things simple." The chairman got very enthused about the idea.

"Go and borrow a razor from Uncle Li then. I'll give it a try," she finally volunteered. "I suppose I'll learn after one or two bad beginnings. It's not so difficult."

"Good, I'll go right now. Maybe we can even buy a razor for ourselves, it'll be more convenient." The chairman walked out.

He soon returned with a razor. "He's just honed it. It's very nice and sharp," he announced.

"It may be a fine razor, but don't think I'll be able to do a good job."

"Study and experience – that's the only way we learn! Anyhow, I'm not afraid."

She boiled some hot water, washed his hair, wrapped a towel round his neck and lathered his head with soap. He got himself a stool and sat down. "Come on," he invited cheerfully.

She couldn't help giggling as she picked up the old-fashioned razor. "Where shall I start?"

"Oh, anywhere. Don't be afraid. Every job has its difficulties when you're doing it for the first time. You've got to be brave. Come on."

Heartened by his words, she plunged the razor into the midst of the long lathered hair. "Does it hurt?" she asked after a minute or two.

"Not a bit. When you've so kindly volunteered to shave my head can I be lacking in the spirit of self-sacrifice?"

So she went on boldly wielding the razor.

From time to time she asked him if it hurt. He always said no and gave her warm words of encouragement. She must not be afraid but must go boldly ahead. Even if the razor nipped his ear once or twice it was after all inevitable. We know that there is a painful phase that must be gone through in every process of learning by "study and experience." Only in this case the commune chairman on whose head the experience was being derived felt the pain much more deeply than his wife who was doing the learning.

The only sound to be heard was the scraping of the razor. Sweat mixed with soapy water trickled down the chairman's brow.

"Keep shaving," said the chairman suddenly. "After two years, I won't need you for it any more."

"Who's going to do it for you?"

"By then, our commune will have its own barber shop and hairdresser. I shall grow my hair longer and part it on the side."

"Fancy that, and you an old man of nearly forty already."

"But why not? Just wait until our district completes its hydro-electric station. Our village will have all the electricity we need. I'll have all the old women of our village beautified with perma-

nent waves. You women can have your hair set and dried with electric blowers."

"Quit babbling. You make me sick."

"All for beauty. I'll certainly see that you get a permanent wave."

"What's got into you?" she asked, her razor pausing in mid-air. "If you keep raving, I'm not going to shave you."

"All right, please hurry up though. How much more is there to do?"

"Only the back of the head."

"Hurry up, will you? We cadres have to inspect all the irrigation ditches this afternoon."

Suddenly he told her to stop. "Don't you hear it?" he asked. "The loudspeaker is calling me. Hurry up, can't you?" he urged impatiently.

"I've gone over the whole head. All I need do now is clean up the few patches I've missed."

"They're calling for me. You can finish when I come back tonight." He rose to leave.

"But you can't go yet. You don't know what you look like."

"Listen," said the chairman with great patience. "From today onwards, you're an experienced head shaver. You can finish any time. Why insist on doing it now when they're calling me? What's more, I'll keep a towel on my head and no one will see

your handiwork." Giving his wife no chance to argue, he draped a towel over his head and stalked out.

"Where've you been?" the others asked as soon as he entered the office. "You kept us all waiting. . . ."

"Er . . . ah . . ." he was not anxious to tell them about his hair-cut. But all eyes were already on his head. Usually after every new hair-cut he let his clean shaven pate shine brightly for all to see. His comrades wondered why he kept a towel round his head today. Something was up.

The woman who sat next to him happened to be the vice-chairman of the commune. She gave a quick tug at the towel which promptly fell off.

"Oh, look, all of you, how beautifully striped it is, just like a big melon," she announced. There was general laughter. "Whose handiwork is this?" asked the vice-chairman.

"My wife's."

"I'm sure no one else could do it so artistically!"

"What could I do? Everyone is so busy."

"You don't really need anyone to do it for you. Just scatter some bran on your head and let the chickens scratch at it next time. They couldn't do any worse." There was more laughter after which the cadres picked up their spades and went to inspect the ditches.

Though it was the cause of much laughter and joking, this hair-cut was a good beginning. Since then, under the direct management of his wife, the chairman has met with much less complications in the matter of his hair.

As for what he said about having our own barber shop and hairdresser and about the permanent waves for the women – these are all entirely possible. There's no reason why our village girls shouldn't have permanent waves. At the rate we're working now, we'll build a future that's a real beauty.

Translated by Tang Sheng
Illustrations by Ho Yun-lan

HO KU-YEN

Maple Leaves

Autumn 1951. The Korean front.

Sunset clouds crimsoned the western horizon. Driver Hu Wen-fa thrust the last piece of steamed bread into his mouth as he strode out of the mess hall, hidden in one of the mountain gullies. Brushing bread crumbs and dust from his jacket with a grease-stained hand, he went to the Chinese People's Volunteers' car-shelter in the woods.

The shelter had a dozen or so dug-outs for cars but at the present moment most of them were empty. Only Hu Wen-fa's lorry nestled in the dug-out like a dark green beast curled up in its lair. On a dirty mud-coloured fur coat spread out beside it, Hu's young assistant Ma Chih-hsiu lay snoring peacefully.

Young Ma's sprawling posture and the relaxed expression on his face made the driver smile. "Hey, wake up, youngster," he called, touching Ma with his foot. "Time for us to be going."

The young man scrambled to his feet, gave Hu a sleepy look and picked up a bucket. Still rubbing his eyes he went to the stream for water without a word as Hu opened the hood and checked the engine. It was not until both had climbed into the lorry that Young Ma, as if only now fully awake, asked, "Where are we going?"

Ho Ku-yen, a young writer, is also a reporter on the staff of the *Chinese People's Liberation Army Daily.*

"To supplies for ammunition, then to the first-aid shelter of Height 412."

"Haven't three lorries gone there already?"

"Yes, three. But two were hit by planes on the way. I don't know what's wrong with those fellows. How could they let the planes get them? Height 412 is still waiting for their ammunition. Today's assignment is something unusual, youngster. We have to cross not only the stretch of highway constantly patrolled by the enemy by air but another section that enemy artillery keeps bombarding. We've almost reached our 35,000 kilometres safe-haulage target. If we let those planes hit us tonight, that will ruin our record!"

"They'll never touch us!"

"I hope not. I warn you though, don't do any napping tonight."

Young Ma yawned to tell his friend politely that he was simply talking rot. "Why don't we get going?" he said impatiently. The driver answered by pressing the starter. As the lorry bumped its way out of the shelter on to the highway, Hu turned once more to look at his assistant as if afraid the lad would really doze off.

Young Ma was an extraordinary person. Though barely twenty, he was quiet by nature, and there were two furrows on his ruddy forehead. But he was by no means the gloomy type. He had few worries and his face was usually smiling. He was noted for his fondness for sleep. No matter where he was, as soon as he found a few minutes to spare, he'd spread his fur coat on the ground and stretch himself flat. In less than five minutes he was snoring; neither wind nor rain could awaken him.

Young Ma was able to forego sleep only under two circumstances. One was when something went wrong with the lorry. Then he was all energy; not even his company commander or political instructor could make him lie down. His soft fur coat no longer beckoned him invitingly but became a nest of needles on which he could not rest peacefully for a single moment. He would crawl under the lorry or climb up and tinker with the engine. If he could fix the trouble in an hour or two, he might find time for a nap afterward. Sometimes the repair took him all day. By the time he finished the job, it would be night and time to start out again. While making repairs, he never bothered about meals but existed on steamed bread brought from the mess hall by

his chums. Often he got along on only a few dry biscuits and cold water. To his mind, the driver needed rest during the day much more than the assistant. He refused always to let Hu give him a hand with ordinary repairs. Only when the trouble was so catastrophic that he felt helpless would he go to the driver for advice.

The other occasion was when an emergency assignment came up, such as the one tonight. Then it was impossible for him to fall asleep. Hu need not have worried at all. Often when enemy planes came out at night, he drove without lights. Young Ma would sway rhythmically in the greyish darkness by Hu's side, sometimes even letting out an occasional snore. But you'd be quite mistaken if you imagined that he was dozing. Just when you least expected it, he'd shout, "Halt! A crater." The next moment he was out of the car, measuring the depth of the pit with his eyes and examining the road to see if it was possible to skirt around. If that was out of the question, he'd silently take his shovel and, with extraordinary dexterity, fill the pit up rapidly.

Driver Hu was just the opposite of Young Ma. Alert, energetic, he did everything smartly, without wasting any time. To him, travelling at less than sixty miles an hour was unbearably dull. Once or twice he and his assistant nearly quarrelled because of this difference in temperament. Take that time they had to cross a section of road under enemy artillery fire. Hu's idea was to run for it, but Ma was dead against such a rash move.

"You might drive at full speed but you'll never be faster than a shell," Ma said slowly.

"What do you suggest then?" asked Hu.

"If you listen to me, we'll just drive along at the same rate and look where we are going. See, the road is pitted with craters, it's like a honeycomb. If we disregard everything and make a dash, we'll probably escape being hit, but the bumping alone will be enough to wreck the lorry."

Hu gave in to his young assistant. They got through safely. The lorry was only slightly scratched here and there by shrapnel.

Another time they had to cross a river in winter. There was a wooden bridge a third of a mile long, but it was submerged under a thin layer of ice. The only evidence of the bridge was a row of wooden posts sticking up out of the water. Hu's idea

was to drive straight through along the posts where the bridge must be. Since it was winter there wasn't much likelihood that a flood had swept the bridge away. It was probably there under the ice.

Young Ma, however, would not have it. After some argument, he jumped out of the lorry saying, "A lorry costs thousands of yuan. We mustn't take chances. If we tumble into the river, that'll be the end of our assignment. We'd better play safe."

Peeling off shoes, socks and his padded pants, he waded into the river even as he spoke. Pieces of ice clinked round his legs but he gritted his teeth and bore the cold. Groping under water all the way along the posts, he made sure that the bridge stood firm before he returned. When he got into his seat, his teeth were chattering. Hu anxiously told him to hurry and put on his fur coat but he said lightly, "What does it matter? This is nothing compared with what the comrades fighting in the frontlines have to bear."

Young Ma was a careful worker, but sometimes he was a bit slow. Hu used to tease him : "You're as fussy as an old lady. . . ."

Young Ma never took the remark seriously but retorted, "Yes, and we Chinese People's Volunteers will go on fussing until we've got rid of the Yankees."

The driver and his assistant were as different as the straight young larch and the resilient mountain vine. When Hu first got Ma as an assistant, he wasn't at all happy. But after six months he was positive that no one had a better helper.

Young Ma lived a simple life. Besides going out on assignments in the lorry and taking lessons, he did little else except eat and sleep. He had no interest in singing or dancing or playing cards. As far as Hu could discover there were only two things Young Ma really cared for: the coloured portrait of Chairman Mao bought three months before in Antung and now pasted on the wind-shield in Young Ma's corner, and Korean maple leaves red with the autumn frost. Every time they start out on a journey he was sure to pick a bunch of bright red ones which he stuck by Chairman Mao's picture, changing it for a fresh bunch whenever the old one turned dry. Hu, like most drivers, liked to keep his lorry neat and tidy. Once when Young Ma was not around,

he threw the rustling maple leaves out of the window. To his surprise a fresh bunch was there the next day.

"Why do you keep sticking these into the cab?" said Hu, a little annoyed. "They're in the way. . . ."

"I haven't put them on your steering wheel, why should they bother you?"

"Got quite a fancy for flowers, eh? You're getting to be like a girl."

"Don't you like maple leaves?"

"No."

"You'll get to like them."

"Not on your life. They are neither fragrant nor pretty."

Young Ma held the maple leaves to his nose and inhaled. "I don't suppose you've ever been to our Jehol Province," he said. "Well, back where we lived, the hills and dales are covered with maple groves. The hillside is all shades of red, from pink to crimson. They're prettier than the prettiest flower. Before I left to come here, the leader of our engineering group sent me to a little hill at the edge of the village. 'Young Ma,' he said, pointing to a construction site at the foot of the hill, 'A new

factory will stand there by the time you return victoriously from Korea. Perhaps you won't even recognize your home by then.' Soon after I arrived in Korea, I heard they'd started building the factory. It's a great thing to be building a factory in our village, but I'm sorry I didn't remind them to take care of the young maple trees when they cleared the ground. It would be such a pity if they chopped down all the maples. . . ."

"What's a few little trees when our country is becoming industrialized. If they've got to be removed why not chop them down?"

"It would be better to transplant them if they're in the way. Wouldn't it be nice to have rows of maples all around the new factory?"

When the first star twinkled in a dark blue sky, a lorry loaded with ammunition sped southward along the highway. In the descending darkness it was hard to make out its number, but whenever another vehicle approached from the opposite direction, its headlights would show a bunch of red leaves bobbing up and down in the lorry's wind-shield like a ball of fire.

Young Ma was getting sleepy again. "We haven't met a single plane," he said, yawning and stretching himself. "I wonder if it's going to be as peaceful as this all the way."

"Don't dream. The Yankees aren't such 'filial sons.' Do you know where we are now?"

"We're nearly at Kuhwa-ri."

"Right. This is a crucial point. . . ."

"Stop a minute. I'll get on the roof to keep watch."

No sooner had the lorry pulled to a stop than flares illuminated the sky, one, two . . . altogether twelve, forming a huge S and making the sky pale white. The car and its shadow were etched sharply against the highway.

"Damn it. Speak of the devil and up he pops," cursed the driver.

"Well, shall we go on?" asked Ma from the roof.

"Yes!" said the driver, slamming the door. "Sit tight, youngster," he shouted. The lorry was off like a whirlwind. Knowing that enemy planes were overhead, Hu didn't turn on the headlights, though there were plenty of craters in the road. Without reducing speed, he drove on skilfully in the dark, turning the

lights on for a fleeting second only when there were obstacles on the way, then switching them out quickly before enemy planes could spot him. He had played hide and seek with the enemy like this more than once and every time he came out victorious.

From his perch on the roof, Young Ma's eyes swept the sky like a searchlight. The lorry soon covered about a mile. In a few more minutes they would be out of the flares area. Suddenly Young Ma heard the shriek of a low flying plane. In the glaring light of the flares he could plainly see an enemy plane flying straight at them.

"Stop!" cried Young Ma. He pounded the roof three times. The lorry stopped with a jerk just as a stream of flaming blue jets sprang up only a few metres ahead of the lorry. The speed of its strafing run shot the plane well past its target. While it was banking to return, Hu stepped on the accelerator. Young Ma's insides were churning from the violent rocking of the car but he held on as best he could, keeping his eyes alertly on the sky. After a few minutes the plane returned to strafe, this time coming lower and faster. Again Ma pounded the roof, but instead of halting, the lorry lurched forward about ten metres with its headlights blazing. Then Hu cut the lights abruptly and swung the car sharply right into a grove of trees beside the highway. Behind them, three booming reports rang out. Rockets! Smoke and dust rose to cover the stars and blue flames danced on the highway.

Hu parked the lorry snugly beneath a big tree and jumped down from the cab, "That scabby toad gave me quite a start – popping out so suddenly!"

"Anything wrong with the lorry?" Young Ma too leaped to the ground from his perch.

"No."

"When you turned off the road so fast, I thought it was because our brakes were gone."

"After all, we can't use the same trick twice without giving ourselves away. If we had just halted again, the devil would have gotten us."

Young Ma thought of the terrible danger they had escaped when the plane had let blast at them with those three rockets. He stared at the driver with respect.

"Neat work! I've learned another trick from you."

The enemy plane was dropping flares in the hope of discovering the target it had lost. But the flickering shadows of the trees sheltered the ammunition lorry.

"He can't bear to part with us," said Young Ma, looking up at the sky now a pale yellow in the light of the flares.

Under cover of his coat, Hu lit a cigarette and took a drag. "Let him roam. It's their petrol he's wasting. What do we care?"

About ten minutes later the droning of the plane died away and the last flare dwindled into a red spark which dropped to the ground. Hu and Young Ma got into their seats. The lorry climbed back to the highway.

They drove on for some six or seven miles when a tall mountain loomed up ahead. Behind it, light and flame flashed like summer lightning. Turning off the engine, Hu poked his head out to listen. Shells were bursting one after another.

"We're entering the hills. Keep your eyes open," he cautioned his assistant. "This is a dangerous spot. High mountains, narrow road and under artillery fire. We can't speed or turn on the lights. There's not much chance of our being hit, but if we go over the precipice, that'll be the end."

"Get started. Two big fellows like us, we'll manage. . . ."

This time Young Ma remained in his seat but poked his head and one arm out of the window to watch the road intently. The lorry crawled up the mountain road. The youngster's crisp voice cut through the explosions and the roar of the engine, "Left, a little more . . . good . . . straight . . . slowly . . . careful, there's a crater . . . right. . . ."

The lorry stopped frequently. Every time, Ma jumped out with his shovel to test the road ahead. They halted countless times and turned countless corners. At last the lorry was nearly at the top. Soon they would be on the south side of the mountain.

Just then, several explosions boomed with a blinding flash of light. Rubble and pine branches showered on the roof and smoke rushed into the car. The engine died with a splutter. Hu cursed under his breath. His assistant was taken aback for a second but he quickly jumped out and entered the smoke and fog south of the hill.

"How is it?" asked Hu when Ma came back.

"The highway has been badly battered but it's still passable. We've got to get by that stretch in a hurry. Don't stop whatever you do!"

As before, the youngster kept his head and shoulders outside the window to shout, "Left, further . . . good . . . careful . . . right . . . straight. . . ."

They were now boxed in by artillery fire. The lorry bumped its way doggedly onwards like a little boat on a stormy sea. Several times it leaned so sharply that the two men nearly slid off their seats. Hu gripped the wheel with hands wet with sweat, gritting his teeth painfully. The lorry made its way along the narrow road between sharp cliffs, with a deep ravine on one side. Shells were bursting all around them. But Hu had no mind for all these. There was only one thought in his head: Listen closely to Young Ma's instructions and push on.

In a voice now hoarse and dry, the youngster rapped out, "Left, left . . . watch that crater . . . slower . . . right. . . ."

Suddenly flames burst round the lorry and a tremendous impact nearly tossed the heavy vehicle into the air. Young Ma was thrown back with a jerk.

"Are you all right, youngster?" Hu gripped Ma's shoulder anxiously.

"Don't stop, don't mind me. Get going."

Young Ma sat up with an effort. The next minute he was looking out of the window again. His voice sounded even stronger than before. "Quick, left . . . good . . . straight . . . right . . . crater. . . ."

The lorry made its way down the southern slope, shells still exploding on all sides. Sand and shrapnel rained down on the roof but Hu heard only Young Ma's "Left . . . right . . . straight . . . ahead . . ." until the lorry drove into a deep ravine.

Hu let out a breath of relief. "We're through! If it weren't for your sharp eyesight, we'd have landed in the chasm."

The lorry went on for another mile or so when it was stopped by a soldier appearing from behind a rock.

"Have you brought us ammunition?"

Hu hopped out of the car. "Yes. Are you from the second detachment?"

Before the man could answer, more soldiers came out from behind clumps of trees. "Ammunition's here. Hurry . . ." they called to one another in muted voices as they surrounded the lorry.

"You had us worried," said one of the fighters. "If you hadn't arrived soon, our guns would have had to go hungry. Brought any grenades along?"

"Oh, plenty."

"Wonderful. That's what we need. We've been at them like this without a stop, since sundown. Let's get the stuff unloaded!"

Hu's experienced ear caught the continuous burst of hand-grenades. They were raining down on the enemy so fast they sounded almost like machine-gun fire. "Come out and help unload," Hu called happily to his assistant.

Everyone got busy round the lorry; many hands meant fast work. The lorry was empty before long. Hu followed the others to the first-aid shelter further down the road. After all the sweating he had done that night, he was parched with thirst. Gulping down a bowl of water, he remembered to fill a flask for Young Ma. The youngster must be dry after shouting directions all the way up hill and down.

When he came within view of the lorry, Hu didn't see Ma anywhere. There was no answer when Hu called, either. Peering inside the cab, he was surprised to find Ma still in his seat, his head lolling over one elbow on the window.

"Hey, wake up," said Hu, shaking the young man's shoulder. "Here, have a drink. It's about time we went back."

Young Ma did not stir.

Stretching out his hand to touch Ma's head the driver was shocked by its iciness. He quickly got in and groped for his flashlight. Only then did he discover that the youngster's face was ashen grey, there was no lustre in his half-closed eyes, and one of his hands was clutching his breast from which blood was flowing, trickling down his elbow and staining the seat bright red.

Hu cradled the youngster's head in his arms and put water to his lips. After a long pause he heard that familiar dear voice again, "We made it, Old Hu. Sorry I can't go back with you. . . . You'll be on your own. . . . Be careful. . . . Don't stop in the barrage area, whatever you do. . . ."

The head on Hu's arm grew heavy. Hu straightened up. His smarting eyes stared at the dark outline of hills in the distance, the flashing lights behind the mountain and occasional red flares rising into the sky. "Open your eyes again, youngster," his heart was crying. "See how our men wipe out the enemy. . . ." His hands grasped the youngster's icy fingers, his heart contracting, a lump in his chest. He leaned his head against Young Ma's chest and wept. . . .

After Young Ma's death, Hu became very quiet. Instead of whistling merrily, his head cocked to one side, he now often sat by his lorry staring into space. The company instructor and Hu's comrades sympathized with him. Everyone felt badly about the youngster's death.

In those tense autumn days, Hu's lorry continued to speed along the highway, sometimes through mud that was knee-deep. He reached the 42,000 *li* safe driving target even before November 7. At a big meeting, the comrades in his company congratulated him on his good record, but even this failed to cheer him. He remained moody and sad.

As he sped through the Korean hills, pitted by shell and bomb craters, stretches of bright red maple trees flew past his windows. They always reminded him of his comrade-in-arms. To him, Young Ma was a slender young maple growing on the vast Chinese countryside, a small, insignificant and ordinary maple in a boundless forest. But it is these very small trees that add together to make the big forests. Yes, although neither fragrant nor intoxicating like fresh flowers, they are prettier than any blossom, particularly during the bitter frost of late autumn.

When Hu's new assistant arrived, he soon discovered that Hu had a strange habit. He liked to keep a bunch of bright red maple leaves in the cab stuck into the sunshade by the picture of Chairman Mao. When the lorry was in motion, the bright red and crimson leaves rustled and swayed. In the glare of the headlights from an oncoming car they were like a ball of bright red flame.

Translated by Tang Sheng
Illustration by Ku Ping-hsin

Selections from the Classics

TANG HSIEN-TSU

The Peony Pavilion

Here we publish ten scenes from the well-known Ming dynasty drama *The Peony Pavilion* by Tang Hsien-tsu of the sixteenth century. There have been various editions of this play, which consists of fifty-five scenes. This translation is based on the text edited by Shuo-yuan in the collection *Sixty Dramas* compiled by Mao Tsin, who lived in the first half of the seventeenth century. Shuo-yuan was the pen-name of Hsu Jih-hsi, a contemporary of Mao Tsin.

THE LEGEND

Prefect Tu Pao has a daughter named Li-niang,
Who dreams in the warm spring sunshine
That she sees a scholar with a twig of willow;
She dies for love of him,
Leaving behind a portrait of herself,
And is buried in lonely Plum Blossom Nunnery.
Three years later Liu, the scholar,
Sees Li-niang in a dream and meets her spirit.
She comes to life; they marry;
He goes to Hangchow for an examination.
The fighting breaks out in Yangchow,

And Prefect Tu is besieged;
In alarm Li-niang sends her husband to seek news,
But her father does not trust him,
While Liu is suffering for the sake of love,
Word comes that he has won
First place in the imperial examination.

SCENE IV

THE FAMILY TUTOR

(Enter Chen Tsui-liang, *the tutor.)*

CHEN:

I study hard by the lamp beside the window,
A poor pedagogue who has failed
Time after time in the examinations.
Alas! My reading has availed me nothing,
In recent years I have been a prey to asthma,
Always coughing, seldom able to touch wine;
While the low fees paid me by the village children
Mean a smokeless kitchen chimney.
Since no man can dwell in the skies,
The lonely, white-haired saint must abide on earth.

I am Chen Tsui-liang, a scholar of Nanan Prefecture. My grandfather was a physician. Having studied the Confucian classics since my childhood and passed the local examination, I am a salaried licentiate. Unfortunately the last examiner gave me a low mark and for two years I have had no teaching post. Nearing sixty, I am short of food and clothing. I have fended for myself as best I could by keeping a medicine shop. Yesterday, Prefect Tu inquired for a tutor for his daughter and my name was put forward. He has sent me an invitation. Now I will just wait outside.

(Enter Prefect Tu *with his* Gateman *and* Runners.*)*

TU:

Fine scenery, few law-suits;
The birds fly off at dawn and back at dusk;
Petals have strewn my seal, low hang my curtains.
The virtue of my forebears is hard to equal.
I take pleasure in my leisurely post in Nanan;
But though I have done good in my term of office
I remain without a son.

I am looking for an old scholar to teach my daughter. Yesterday the prefectural college recommended Mr. Chen Tsui-liang, a well-read man nearing sixty. He can teach my daughter and be a companion to me. Today I have no business in my *yamen.* Let the feast be laid and tell me when the guest arrives.

(The Runners *assent.)*

GATEMAN: Mr. Chen is at the gate, sir!

TU: Invite him in.

GATEMAN *(calling)*: Licentiate Chen of Nanan Prefecture!

CHEN *(kneeling, bowing and kneeling again)*: Chen Tsui-liang pays his respects!

To spread learning, start a school.

TU:

To show respect, give a feast.

CHEN:

Here are cups to make a toast.

TU:

Both host and guest take seats.

(To the Runners.*)* Mr. Chen and I are going to talk: you may go. My own boy can serve us.

(The Runners *assent and leave. Enter the* Servant-boy.*)*

TU: I have heard much of your great learning, sir, and have a daughter whom I would like you to teach. Having intimated this yesterday, today I shall introduce her to you.

CHEN: Excellent! My one fear is that I may prove unworthy of serving as the young lady's tutor.

TU: Sound the gong, boy, for the young mistress.

(*Enter* Li-niang *with her* Maid.)

LI-NIANG:

Painted eyebrows, swaying pearl pendants:
A sweet maid comes from behind the embroidered screen;
My lotus-feet take me softly to my father;
Our family has a fine Confucian tradition.

MAID: Gracious! The tutor has come – what shall we do?

LI-NIANG: We must go and pay our respects.

Those worthy and accomplished women of old
Are fine examples for us;
If you learn to read
You will be a better servant.

MAID (*calling out*): The young mistress is here!

(Li-niang *greets her father.*)

TU: Come here, daughter, and pay your respects to your tutor.

(Music *sounds as* Li-niang *pays her respects.*)

LI-NIANG: Your pupil, with gifts as commonplace as reed or willow, dares aspire to become a peach or plum under your guidance.

CHEN: I am honoured to be entrusted with the care of this pearl, the polishing of this jade.

TU: Spring Fragrance, kowtow to the tutor. You will keep the young mistress company in her studies.

(*The* Maid *kowtows.*)

CHEN: May I ask what books the young lady will study?

TU: My daughter already has the *Four Books** by heart. *The Book of Songs* begins by setting forth the virtues of ancient queens. Our family has had a great poet too. Let her study *The Book of Songs.*

As I near fifty, books are all my delight;
My library has full thirty thousand volumes.

* *The Book of Mencius, The Analects of Confucius, The Doctrine of the Mean* and *The Great Learning.*

(He sighs.) But I have no son to whom to pass on my learning.

I have all the books they can need, sir. If they do not study well, the maid must be beaten.

MAID: Oh!

TU:

Though not a son, my daughter may become a scholar;
But the serving-maid needs watching!

CHEN: Very good, sir.

TU: Spring Fragrance, see that you wait on your mistress well. I shall leave you now. (*Exit.*)

MAID: Will you start teaching us, sir?

CHEN: I shall teach you *The Book of Songs. (He recites.)*

'Fair, fair,' cry the ospreys
On the island in the river.
Lovely is this noble lady,
Fit bride for our lord.

LI-NIANG: Please, sir, will you explain to us the general significance of this classic?

(*The* Maid *tiptoes out.*)

CHEN:

*The Books of Songs is the flower of the Six Classics,**
It has tales of charming ladies,
Of Chiang Yuan, an excellent mother,
Of virtuous queens who were above jealousy;
It has songs of noble ladies,
Like The Cockcrow or The Swallows,
Songs of tears shed by the Yangtse,
Of longing for the Han River,
Of thrifty, unadorned maids of taste and refinement,
Who ordered well house and home.

LI-NIANG: Is there so much to learn, then, in this classic!

CHEN: The three hundred songs can be summed up in one phrase:

Remember well these three words:
Think no evil!

* *The Book of Change, The Book of Songs, The Book of History, The Book of Rites, The Book of Music* and *The Spring and Autumn Annals.*

LI-NIANG: Where has Spring Fragrance gone?
CHEN: Shall I call her? (*He calls three times before the* Maid *enters.*)
MAID: What's the hurry?
LI-NIANG (*annoyed*): You tiresome girl! Where have you been?
MAID (*smiling*): I went to the back. There's a great garden there with lovely flowers and green willows — we can have fun there!
CHEN: H'm! So instead of applying yourself to study, you want to amuse yourself in the garden. Let me fetch the rod and give you a beating.
LI-NIANG: Please let her off, sir, this once!
MAID: I won't do it again.
CHEN: Very well. I'll overlook it this time. You may get up.

Though girls seek neither fame nor officialdom,
They should be taught just like boys.

Finish your reading before you go back to the house, I am going to have a talk with the prefect.

You must make the most of your time
By this bright window with its new red gauze. (*Exit.*)

MAID (*pointing after the tutor and scolding*): Silly old ox! Crazy old dog! There's no fun in him at all.
LI-NIANG (*stopping her*): Don't talk like that. A teacher has to be treated like a father. He has every right to beat you. Tell me, where is this garden?

(*The* Maid *sulks till* Li-niang *smiles at her.*)

MAID (*pointing*): Over there.
LI-NIANG: Is it picturesque?
MAID: Picturesque? Well, there are half a dozen pavilions and a couple of swings, besides winding streams, artificial mountains, beautiful flowers and rare herbs. It is splendid!
LI-NIANG: Imagine there being such a place here! Let's go back now.

(*Exeunt.*)

SCENE V

THE GIRL'S DREAM

(*Enter the* Gardener's Boy.)

BOY:

I work all day long among flowers;
When I slip to the street to sell them,
The clerks and runners of the yamen *catch me,*
And very nearly kill me with strong liquor.

I am gardener's boy in the Tu family. Yesterday Spring Fragrance told me that our young mistress was coming out to enjoy the garden and I must clear the paths. I think I'll wait here.

(*Enter the* Maid.)

MAID:

I am a young maid of fourteen,
Growing up in spring, learning of love;
Some day I must find a lover
To be at my beck and call.

The young mistress wants to stroll in the garden, and I've told the gardener's boy to clear it up. Here he is.

(*She calls the* Boy.)

BOY: Here is Sister Spring Fragrance! (*He makes a comical gesture.*)
MAID: Do you want a beating? You have been so busy going out to get drunk these days that you haven't even sent us vegetables.
BOY: That's the vegetable gardener's job.
MAID: You don't fetch water either.
BOY: That's the water-carrier's job.
MAID: And you don't bring flowers to the house.
BOY: I do that every morning. One bunch for the old lady, one for the young.
MAID: There should be another bunch for me.
BOY: Yes, of course! I deserve to be beaten!

MAID: Yesterday I told you to clean the garden paths. Have you done that?

BOY: I have. There's the young mistress coming.

MAID: Keep out of the way (*Exit the* Boy.)

(*Enter* Li-niang.)

LI-NIANG:

Waking, I hear the oriole sing;
Seasons whirl past while I
Am rooted in this small, secluded courtyard.

MAID:

Now all our incense is burnt,
All our embroidery finished;
This spring makes us sadder than last.

LI-NIANG:

*At dawn I gaze at the Plum Pass,**
Still wearing last night's powder.

MAID:

You lean on the balustrade,
Your hair in disorder.

LI-NIANG:

The more I would marshal my thoughts,
The more they tangle.

MAID:

And I have told the swallows
To hasten the spring.

LI-NIANG: Spring Fragrance, let us go to the back garden.

MAID: Very well. (*She walks on.*) Look!

The corridors have lost some gold and colour;
Beside the pool the mossy path is green;
Crossing the grass, we are afraid to soil
Our new embroidered slippers;
And we hang small golden bells
On the flowers we love.

LI-NIANG: Without coming out, no one can imagine how lovely the spring is.

* South of Nanan.

What a riot of brilliant purple and tender crimson
Among the ruined wells and crumbling walls!
What an enchanting sight on this fine morning –
But who takes delight in the spring?

My father and mother never so much as remark on the beauty of this scene!

TOGETHER:

Clouds drift and flutter down at dawn and dusk
Over the green pavilion and painted barges,
Across the misty waves in wind and rain;
But those behind silk screens
Make light of this fine season.

MAID: All the flowers have blossomed except the peony.

LI-NIANG:

Crimson azaleas carpet the emerald mountains,
Soft vines climb drunkenly above the roses;
Lovely as the peony is,
It blossoms only when the spring has gone.

MAID: Look at the mating swallows and orioles.

TOGETHER:

As we feast our eyes,
The swallows' chirps are clear as scissor-cuts,
And the orioles' notes smooth and liquid.

LI-NIANG: Come.

MAID: We have no time to see everything in the garden.

LI-NIANG: Never mind. (*She moves on.*)

I have not seen enough,
But let it go;
What would it profit us even to enjoy
All twelve terraces and pavilions?
We had better go home to rest.

(They enter the house.)

MAID:

I open the door of the west wing,
And smooth the eastern couch.
Purple iris in the vase,
Aloes incense in the censer.

Have a rest, young mistress, while I go to the old lady. *(Exit.)*

LI-NIANG *(sighs)*:

We come back from enjoying the spring,
And my loveliness is fresh as spring itself.
Ah, spring, after sporting with you
How shall I console myself when you are gone?

(She lowers her head in thought.) How true it is that spring makes the heart sad! I am wasting my youth as time slips away. *(She sheds tears.)* Though I am pretty as a flower, my fate is as uncertain as a wind-blown leaf.

Spring yearnings are hard to bear,
And in secret I long for a lover;
But as daughter of a prominent family
I must make a suitable match;
So my youth is wasted.
None knows the languor I feel,
And I blush to think of my dreams.
Spring and youth are slipping away,
But to whom can I tell my sorrow?
I can only appeal to Heaven.

I am tired. Let me have a short nap here at the table. *(She falls asleep.)*

(Enter Liu's *spirit, holding a willow twig.)*

LIU:

In warm sun the orioles warble,
In clear weather mortals smile;
Following the fallen petals in the stream,
Like Yuan Chao I am come to fairyland.*

I have followed Young Mistress Tu here from the garden. Where is she now? *(He sees her.)* Ah, madam!

(Li-niang *is startled. They greet each other.)*

* According to a Han dynasty legend, Yuan Chao was entertained by a goddess on Mount Tientai for many years.

LIU: I have been searching for you everywhere. I did not know you were here. (Li-niang *glances sideways at him, but says nothing.*) I have just plucked a willow twig in the garden, sister. As you are so well-read, will you make a poem for the willow?

(Li-niang *wants to cry out in pleasure and surprise, but checks herself.)*

LI-NIANG (*aside*): I have never seen this gentleman before. How did he come here?

LIU (*laughing*): Madam, I am madly in love with you —

Because you are fair as a flower
And youth is slipping away like running water.
I have searched for you everywhere,
And now I find you in your chamber alone.

Let us take a stroll. I have so much to say to you! (Li-niang *smiles, but will not move.* Liu *takes her sleeve.)*

LI-NIANG (*in a low voice*): Where do you want to go?

LIU:

Past the terrace of peonies,
By the piled-up rocks.

LI-NIANG (*in a low voice*): For what reason?

LIU (*whispering*):

There to unfasten your gown,
Loosen your girdle,
And stop your mouth with your sleeve,
That you may endure my ardour for a while.

(Li-niang *bashfully pushes him away, but he takes her in his arms.*)

TOGETHER:

Somewhere we have met before,
We are not strangers;
Have we nothing to say to each other?

(Liu *carries* Li-niang *off.*)

(Enter the God of Flowers *in a cap and red gown decked with flowers.)*

GOD:

Loving the flowers, I make them blossom early.
The work of another spring is nearly done;
Petals fall like rain and grieve the hearts of men;
The lovers dream on beneath the clouds of blossom.

I am the flower god in charge of the prefect's back garden. The prefect's daughter Li-niang is destined to marry the scholar Liu Meng-mei, and she was so affected by the spring while strolling round the garden that now she has dreamed of him. As the god of flowers who cares for all blossoms, I am going to protect them so that they may enjoy themselves to the full.

All changes follow nature;
And lusty youth with passion
Makes tender buds burst open;
Spring fosters illusion, illusion kindles love;
Their wantonness stains the blossoms.

I will pelt them with petals to wake them. (*He throws flowers at them.*)

You have fully enjoyed
Your spring dream;
Now do not linger!
Red petals scatter the ground.

You are half awake now, sir. After this dream you should see the young lady back to her scented pavilion. I will leave you. (*Exit.*)

(*Enter* Liu *and* Li-niang *hand in hand.*)

LIU:

Just now, aided by Heaven
We couched ourselves on flowers!

Did that please you, lady?

(Li-niang *hangs her head.*)

LIU: *Your cloudy locks hang loose.*

Madam, do not forget me.

At the sight of you,
I long to hold you close and linger here,
Till we melt into one.
Your beauty is as fresh
As are the crimson petals after rain.

LI-NIANG: Are you leaving me, sir?

LIU: You are tired now, sister. You must rest. (*He makes* Li-niang *sit by the table again, and touches her shoulder lightly.*) I am going, sister. (*He looks back.*) Rest well. I shall come back.

We walked here through the light spring rain;
Sleep now like a cloud above the sacred mountain. (*Exit.*)

LI-NIANG (*waking up and calling softly*): Sir, have you gone? (*She falls asleep again.*)

(*Enter* Mrs. Tu.)

MRS. TU:
In the prefect's office my husband sits,
By the window my daughter sews,
Embroidering skirts and dresses
With flowers and birds in pairs.

Child, why are you sleeping here?

LI-NIANG (*waking and calling to* Liu): Come back!

MRS. TU: What is it, child?

LI-NIANG (*startled*): Oh, mother, it is you!

MRS. TU: Why don't you do some needlework, child, or read to pass the time? Why should you sleep during the day?

LI-NIANG: I amused myself in the garden till I found the spring too disturbing and came back to my room. As I had nothing to do and was rather tired, I took a short nap and did not see you come in. Please excuse my rudeness.

MRS. TU: That garden is too quiet. You must not go there so often.

LI-NIANG: Yes, mother.

MRS. TU:
A mother's lot is hard,
Always giving way to her children. (*Exit.*)

LI-NIANG (*sees her mother out and gives a long sigh*): Ah, Heaven! What a strange adventure I had today! When I went to the garden and saw all the flowers in blossom, my heart ached and I came home in low spirits. Then as I was sleeping in my chamber, in walked a handsome young man. He had plucked a twig of willow in the garden and he said to me with a smile, "As you are so well-read, sister, will you make a poem for the willow?" I wanted to answer, but could not. I had never set eyes on him before and did not know his name. While I was wondering what to do, he stepped forward and spoke to me tenderly, then carried me in his arms to the Peony Pavilion. There by the terrace of flowers we took our pleasure, with more love and tenderness than words can tell. After this he brought me back to sleep, bidding me rest well; but before I could see him off my mother came in and woke me. Then I sprang up bathed in cold sweat and found it was all a dream. I hastily paid my respects to my mother, and when she scolded me I could not answer her for I was thinking of my dream. How can I ever forget it? (*She sheds tears:*)

From my dream of love
My mother woke me,
Charging me not to sleep by day.
I am bathed in icy sweat,
My heart is pounding,
My limbs have turned to water,
My hair is dishevelled.
Must I remain seated here?
Let me sleep again!

(*Enter the* Maid.)

MAID:
Powder for the evening toilet,
Scent for the balmy spring.

Your bedding has been warmed, young mistress. You had better sleep now.

LI-NIANG:
Tired after strolling, languid with the spring,

I do not need to scent my embroidered quilts.
Pray Heaven my dream has not fled far away!

SCENE VII

IN SEARCH OF THE DREAM

(*Enter* Li-niang.)

LI-NIANG:

Like distant hills painted on folding screens
My darkened eyebrows contract with bitter longing;
My heart aches under the quilt and I am weary,
But not because I watched the moon till late
Or rose at dawn to tend the flowers I love.
There by the peonies I dreamed a dream:
The fancies of a girl are hard to tell.
Sleepless the whole night by the flickering lamp,
I called my maid but she was fast asleep.

Yesterday after I strolled out to enjoy the spring, a stranger came to me in a dream. We fell in love at first sight. Now sitting here alone, my spirits are low. I will take this chance, unknown to my maid, to slip back to the garden to the scene of my dream.

I have no phoenix wings to soar aloft,
But love entered my heart in a dream.

(*She walks on.*) I am glad to find the garden gate is open and no gardeners are here. The ground is strewn with red petals.

This year more than ever before
Spring fires the blood;
In spite of high white walls,
Spring penetrates to every nook and cranny. (She stumbles.)

Ah, sleeping roses are clinging to my skirt,
Clutching like human hands.
What a pretty brook!
Why should I revisit this fairyland?
Any day the flowers may fall.
Heaven is no niggard with flowers,
But my heart bleeds to see the fallen red.
Ah, the balmy spring is wasted!

(*Enter the* Maid.)

MAID: It is time to eat, but my young lady has vanished. So I am looking for her. Ah, there you are, young mistress!

So my pretty one is standing here
Beside the blossoming tree!
It is time for the morning meal—
Why is she roaming the garden all alone?

LI-NIANG:

Swallows flashed past
The painted balustrades
Carrying mud for their nests;
And by chance I strolled into the garden.

MAID: The mistress is asking for you.

She says this deserted garden
Hides flower fairies and dryads.
Go back to your small, safe courtyard.

LI-NIANG: I will. Tell your mistress that I shall be coming soon.

MAID:

Flowers by the steps
Seem to attend some master;
Birds in the cage
Like to abuse their captors. (Exit.)

LI-NIANG: Now Spring Fragrance has gone, I have barely time to find the place of my dream.

There is the rock,
There the Peony Pavilion;
Beside carved balustrades
Are peonies budding;

Willow-tendrils hang down like silk threads,
And elm-seeds like strings of cash
With golden coins between them.

Ah, yesterday when that scholar with a willow twig asked me write a poem, my heart beat so fast!

He leaned on the rock
Where I was standing;
He threw me down,
Jade limbs grew hot in the sun;
Beyond the balustrades and swing

I spread my embroidered skirt,
To hide us from Heaven's sight.
Then time stood still:
We knew sweetness no words can tell.

As we were enjoying ourselves in the dream, petals showered down on us.

He fell on me with kisses,
Caressing my shoulder;
And slowly I responded,
Eager to please him.
Intoxicated with love,
He showed such tenderness!
And red petals rained down on us —
Was this all a dream?

But now I can find nothing. How lonely and deserted the Peony Pavilion and the balustrades look, with not a soul about. My heart will surely break. (*She sheds tears.*)

In this desolate place
Are few pavilions standing;
Though I search wistfully,
I can find nothing.
Gone are all signs of our love.
Will the lovers ever appear again
Among the flowers and willows?
All seen, all sensed,
Today and yesterday
Are a world apart.

Let me stay a little longer. (*She gazes round.*) Ah, in that lonely spot I see a great plum tree laden with lovely fruit. If I should die, I would like to be buried here.

My heart has gone out to the plum tree;
These flowers which mortals love
Live and die for a passing whim.
I droop and pine,
But to whom can I complain?
My spirit will hover here in dark, rainy weather,
Hard by the root of the plum tree. (*She sits down to rest.*)

(*Enter the* Maid.)

MAID:

The lady loiters by the spring pavilion,
Her maid burns incense in the quiet courtyard.

So my young lady has grown tired of walking and is sitting under the plum tree.

You came to stroll in the garden,
Why sit beneath the plum tree?

LI-NIANG:

Long, long I gaze at the sky,
And suddenly know such self-pity! (*She sheds tears.*)
My heart is broken,
And I shed tears in secret.

MAID: Why are you so sad, young mistress? Let us go back.

(Li-niang *takes a few steps and then stops again.*)

LI-NIANG:

I lean listlessly on my maid
As we walk to the painted railings.
Tell your mistress not to wait;
The flowers will see
Li-niang asleep alone.

SCENE IX

THE PAINTING OF THE PORTRAIT

(*Enter* Li-niang.)

LI-NIANG:

Down a winding path flits the dream,
The beloved is gone.
Quiet my chamber, chill my pendants of jade,
Melting away my heart;
Like flowers wreathed in mist
Or moonlight through the clouds,
My secret love was kindled.

(*Enter the* Maid.)

MAID:

Emerald butterflies flutter
In search of fragrance;
Languidly rising to dress,
She hears the cuckoo.
Spring departs
Though red sleeves beckon.

LI-NIANG:

I lost my heart to a vision;
Gone is the dream of Peony Pavilion.

MAID:

Spring longing arches her eyebrows
Who will paint them?

LI-NIANG:

Shivering, I seek to drive away my sorrow;
The flower sheds its dewy tears in secret.

TOGETHER:

In rain or shine, the painter's task is hard;
The mountain is wrapped in mist.

MAID: Since you strolled in the garden, young mistress, you have lost your appetite and cannot sleep. Spring seems to have bewitched you and made you a shadow. If you'll take a foolish girl's advice, don't go back to the garden again.

LI-NIANG: How can you understand? In a dream, by stealth, I pursued the sights of spring, but morning frost is blighting the blossom now.

Spring has gone and all is chill;
These days, listless and dejected
After dressing I sit alone before the incense;
How can I root out the sorrow which grows like grass?
How can joy rekindle my heart?
I try to force a smile, but for whose sake?
My tears flow as my spirit roams in dreams.

MAID:

Cool your hot passion, young mistress;
Dry your cold tears.
Your two strolls in spring-time show clearly

That you cannot bear the chirping of swallows and orioles.
Think well, and do not make your mother anxious;
Go on moping, and your beauty will soon be gone.

LI-NIANG (*startled*): Ah, if what Spring Fragrance says is true, I must have lost my looks. Let me consult my mirror. (*She gazes in the mirror and sheds tears.*) How have I, once pretty, grown so thin? I must paint my portrait now to leave to the world; or if I should die, who would know that Li-niang was once lovely? Fetch me silk and colours, Spring Fragrance, and watch me paint my own picture.

(*The* Maid *brings the silk and brushes.*)

MAID:

Spring beauty is easy to sketch,
But hidden sorrow is hard.

The silk and colours are ready.

LI-NIANG (*weeping*): Now Tu Li-niang must paint her own youth and beauty!

The girl with a face like a flower
Has withered so soon!
Is Heaven jealous of mortal happiness,
Or must all beauty vanish?
Now I paint the cherry lips and willowy form,
The flowing, cloudy tresses,
The long, dark eyebrows;
But most of all the beauty is in the eyes,
Eyes like limpid pools,
Gentle as distant hills in spring,
And the forehead framed in tiny jewels.

Hold it up, Spring Fragrance. Is it like?

MAID:

It is easy to draw a girl,
But hard to draw true beauty.
This is painted to the life,
Like a flower's shadow or the moon's reflection.

LI-NIANG (*pleased*): I believe it has charm;

Nearly done, it is much improved,
Lovelier than the girl herself.

MAID: All it lacks is a young man beside you.

If you had married a fine husband early,
Your portraits could hang high as a handsome couple.

LI-NIANG: Let me tell you a secret, Spring Fragrance. A young man did come when I was in the garden!

MAID (*amazed*): How could that be?

LI-NIANG: It was a dream.

There was one who smiled at my side.
I could draw him from memory,
His cast of features and his whole appearance;
But I dare not share my secret,
No, this portrait must rest alone like the moon in the clouds.
What noble scholar will come and reach for the stars?

I remember now, Spring Fragrance, that the scholar in my dream gave me a willow twig. This may be a sign that my husband's name will be "Liu."* I have made a verse which hints at my love. Do you think I should write it on this scroll?

MAID: Yes, indeed.

LI-NIANG (*chanting as she writes*):

Seen from near by the figure seems alive;
From afar she seems an angel.
If one day she can join her scholar-lover,
It will be near the plum and the willow.

(*She puts down her brush and sighs.*) Call the servant-boy quietly, Spring Fragrance, and tell him to take this painting to the mounting shop. See that they mount it well.

We enjoy it in the chamber where none comes.

MAID:

Such beauty should adorn the temple of love.

TOGETHER:

But, alas, it may vanish in the rain and clouds!

* Meaning "willow."

SCENE X

THE MOTHER'S ANXIETY

(*Enter* Mrs. Tu.)

MRS. TU:

What shall I do?
My lovely child is ill-fated;
Soon I shall be left alone.

I am nearing fifty and have only one daughter, Li-niang, who has been ill for half a year now. She does not seem to be suffering from any disease caused by the wind, cold, damp or heat. Spring Fragrance must know what is the matter. Let me ask her. Where are you, girl?

(*Enter the* Maid.)

MAID: Coming, ma'am!

I see no handsome lads,
But wait on a delicate girl.

Spring Fragrance kowtows to you.

MRS. TU: Your young mistress used to enjoy good health, but less than six months after I entrusted her to you she fell ill. I am very angry with you. Has she eaten well recently?

MAID:

She eats and drinks very little,
And will not answer when you speak to her;
I see her weeping in secret
Or laughing alone,
Drowsy and heavy with sleep.

MRS. TU: Have you told the doctor this?

MAID:

Unless his needle can put an end to her longing,
His drugs will never cure her.

MRS. TU: What is her illness?

MAID: That I don't know.

Autumn has chilled her pillow,
Yet she is suffering from a spring disorder.

MRS. TU: (*weeps*): What can I do, girl? This must be your fault!

MAID: I will tell you, ma'am. It all started that day when you saw our young lady after she came back from the garden. She said there was a scholar with a willow twig in his hand who wanted her to write a poem. She refused because they were strangers.

MRS. TU: Quite right. But what then?

MAID: Then . . . then . . . the scholar clapped his hands and carried her off to the Peony Pavilion. . . .

MRS. TU: What did he do then?

MAID: How should I know? The young lady dreamed this.

MRS. TU (*startled*): It was a dream?

MAID: Yes, ma'am.

MRS. TU: Then she must be bewitched. Call your master here at once.

MAID: Sir, will you come?

(*Enter* Tu.)

TU:

I dread the weight of my official seal,
And pray not to lose
The pearl in the palm of my hand.

What caused your daughter's illness, ma'am?

MRS. TU (*weeping*): Sir,

It hurts me to speak of it:
No one knows the cause.
She sleeps long and rises rarely,
And smiles or sheds tears to herself
Over some phantom.

It seems she went to the back garden one day and dreamed that a man with a willow twig in his hand carried her off. (*She sighs.*)

I fear she has offended some willow sprite,
Or the spirit of some flower.
Pray quickly to the stars, my lord,
For her star is surely ill-fated.

TU: Indeed! I engaged Master Chen to teach her the classics so that she should remain within bounds; but her mother encouraged her to gad about! (*He laughs.*) She has simply caught cold or contracted some minor ailment in the wind or sun. If you want to exorcize her, there is no need for a shaman: just ask Abbess Shih to chant some sutras for her. As the ancients said: Put your trust in shamans instead of in physicians, and your illness will never be cured. I have asked Master Chen to make a diagnosis.

MRS. TU: What use is a diagnosis? Had she been married, she'd never have fallen ill.

(*Enter a* Servant.)

SERVANT: An official envoy is here, sir.

TU:

An officer must attend to affairs of state.
Look to our daughter well, ma'am.
Most diseases are contracted in autumn. (He goes out with the Servant.)

MRS. TU:

An official post is a heavy responsibility.
Those who have sons need desire nothing else.

Now my husband has gone to see this envoy, with no thought for his daughter's illness. Ah! I had better get the abbess to exorcize her and her tutor to prescribe medicine at the same time. Then we shall see how she does.

Mothers alone love their daughters;
We cannot dispense with shamans and physicians. (Exit.)

SCENE XIII

THE PARENTS MOURN THEIR CHILD

(*Enter the* Maid *supporting* Li-niang *who is ill.*)

LI-NIANG:

Empty the moon pavilion,
Shrouded in mist the path

I am chilled to the bone in autumn.
What force is stronger in the world than love?
My spirit takes flight, my heart breaks.

Spring Fragrance, I have been so ill that I do not know what day of the month this is.

MAID: This is the middle of the eighth month.

LI-NIANG: Why, then it is the festival of the moon! I hear Master Chen has predicted by the stars that my life will reach a turning point at the Moon Festival. Now my illness is worse and tonight my strength is failing. Open the window so that I can see the moon.

(*The* Maid *opens the window and* Li-niang *gazes out.*)

LI-NIANG:

Where will the icy moon emerge
In the boundless ocean of heaven?
Where is the hare with jade pestle*
That stole the drug for the goddess?
The west wind has scattered my dream,
The scholar has gone,
Leaving no trace behind.
Have ghosts and spirits deceived me?
My brows contract,
My heart is racked with pain. (She feels faint.)

MAID:

Suddenly spring takes flight,
All is cloud and mist;
Human life is not a toy:
Are beauty and youth
To be lightly tossed away?

Let me see if I can outwit her. The moon is rising, young mistress.

Let the full moon shine through your dream!

LI-NIANG (*looking out and sighing*): I remember something, Spring Fragrance. That portrait I painted has a verse of mine on it which is not for the eyes of strangers. After

* According to legend, a hare lives in the moon.

I am dead, put the scroll in a sandalwood box and hide it among the rocks in the garden.

MAID: Don't you worry about that. If such an unlucky thing happens, you will be all alone in the grave. You must recover instead. Then we shall get permission from the master to choose as your husband a scholar with the character "plum" or "willow" in his name. The two of you will live and die together – how much better that will be!

LI-NIANG: I fear that can never be.

I have waited for this festival of the moon,
But I must bow to fate.
I am not fated to have the moon shine on me;
My span of life must end in the rain tonight. (She faints away.)

MAID (*alarmed*): The young lady has fainted! Call our master and mistress.

(*Enter* Prefect Tu *and* Mrs. Tu.)

TOGETHER: How is our daughter?

MAID: Sir! Ma'am! She is very ill.

TOGETHER: Ah, what is to be done?

After your dream in the garden
You were spellbound and enchanted;
You could not raise your head so drowsy with sleep. (They weep.)
You should have gone early to your bridal bed,
Not slept lonely night after night.
Now our young fledgeling is lost,
And broken her parents' hearts.

LI-NIANG (*waking up*):

My spirit trembles on a fluttering thread;
Bells under the eaves are tingling. (She weeps.)
Mother, I must bid you goodbye. (She stumbles.)
You have treasured me like gold since I was a child,
But your unfilial daughter can serve you no longer.

Mother, this is fate.

The flower has blossomed and faded;
In my next existence I hope to serve you again.

ALL (*weeping*):

Cursed be the autumn wind
Which has despoiled our pretty flower so soon!

LI-NIANG: Mother, when I am dead what will you do with my body?

MRS. TU: Child, we shall send your coffin to the ancestral graveyard.

LI-NIANG (*shedding tears*):

Must my corpse journey so far
Across thousands of hills?

Right or wrong, please do as I ask. There is a plum tree in the back garden which I love dearly. Bury me under that plum tree.

MRS. TU: Why do you ask this?

LI-NIANG:

If I cannot live for ever under the cassia
Like the goddess of the moon,
Then let my bones be buried
Beneath the blossoming plum.

(Mrs. Tu *weeps.*)

TU:

See her raising her face
Bathed in tears and icy sweat!

MRS. TU:

Would I could die before her!

TOGETHER:

Heaven is cruel to our flower,
Sending wind and rain on the Moon Festival.

LI-NIANG: Ah, Spring Fragrance, help me to the hall. (*She leans on her* Maid.)

Never again shall I hear the wind at dawn.
Where can my ghost find its lover?

Father, tonight is the Moon Festival, is it not?

TU: It is, my child.

LI-NIANG (*sighing*):

Can the waning moon wax anew?
Can the extinguished lamp give light again? (Exeunt.)

(Re-enter the Maid, *crying.)*

MAID: Ah, my poor young lady! My young lady! Unseasonable weather in nature, untimely deaths among men! My young lady is dead. Ah, unhappy day!

MRS. TU (*weeping bitterly*): My darling child!

You ran to your mother a hundred times a day,
You never laughed before strangers,
You knew a daughter's rules of conduct by heart:
*I had no need to move house three times for you.**
But though I grieved because you were weak and frail,
I little thought you would fall ill and die. (Weeping.)
You have broken your mother's heart.
Alas, your spirit has gone beyond recall!

(She faints away, and the Maid *cries out in alarm.)*

TU: Alas, my child!

(*Enter the* Servant.)

SERVANT:

The crow announces ill fortune,
The magpie good.

My lord, you have been promoted.

TU (*reading the edict*): A report from the ministry. His Majesty decrees that to resist the attack of the Golden Tartars, Tu Pao, Prefect of Nanan, is hereby appointed garrison commander of Yangchow. Let him proceed to his post without delay. (*He sighs.*) Madam, the court has ordered me north: we cannot take our daughter's coffin west. Ask the tutor to come here, man.

SERVANT: Master Chen, you are wanted.

(*Enter the tutor,* Chen.)

CHEN:

So inconstant is human fate,
Congratulations and condolences
Often go hand in hand. (He greets Tu.)

* The mother of Mencius was said to have moved house three times, in order to choose good neighbours for her son.

TU: Master Chen, my daughter is dead.

CHEN (*weeping*): Alas! The young lady has ascended to heaven, leaving me with no pupil, while you, sir, have been promoted, leaving me with no patron. (*They all weep.*)

TU: Master Chen, let us discuss what is to be done. Since I am under orders to go, I cannot delay. My daughter's last request was to be buried under the plum tree in the back garden. Since it will not be fitting for my successors to stay there, I shall give orders to have the back garden fenced off and a Plum Blossom Nunnery built for my daughter's shrine. I shall ask Abbess Shih to preside and attend to the sacrifices. But someone else will be needed to watch over the grave.

MRS. TU: Let us trouble Master Chen with this.

CHEN: Since your ladyship wishes it, I will do this gladly.

MRS. TU: We should leave some property too, sir, so that the rent will pay for the sacrifices.

TU: I have some thirty acres of public land. I shall leave that to cover all expenses.

CHEN: I am indebted to you, sir.

TU: Master Chen,

Here will be our daughter's low grave mound,
And her old parents ask this favour of you:
There is no need to watch here all year round,
But on the eve of the Spring Festival
Pray make offerings to her spirit!

SCENE XVI

THE SCHOLAR DISCOVERS THE PAINTING

(*Enter* Liu.)

LIU:

Pear blossom fills the court with fragrance;
Well-nigh distracted by one year of sorrow
I cannot express all my longing,
But grow gaunt as the willow itself.

I have been ill here in Plum Blossom Nunnery. Luckily my friend Chen understands medicine and has cured me. These days the sights of spring depress me. I hear from the abbess that there is a garden behind the nunnery, where I can stroll to pass the time. I am on my way there now. (*He walks on.*)

Marble balustrades remain;
The lonely walls distress me;
I can imagine how, in the good old days,
Trees flourished here, veiled in mist. (He reaches the garden.)
Ah, this garden is a large one!
I see beauty wasting secretly away.
West of the painted wall
I turn south and left again. (He falls.)
The green moss is slippery,
The walls have crumbled.
Why is the double gate closed?

Many visitors must have come here in the old days. They have cut their names on the bamboo.

Year have passed since visitors came
And carved their names on bamboos;
Now lonely flowers bloom by the steps,
Wild grass is growing rank,
And the gate is closed;
Why is this paradise

Left to go to ruin?
The lake pavilion has decayed,
The painted barge is deserted,
The swing hangs idle.
There was no war here
To cause such desolation;
What tragedy, then, made the owners
Depart with broken hearts?
In sympathy I pace slowly
Round pools and rocks.

What a fine artificial mountain! (*He looks at it closely.*) Ah, there is a small casket inside. Let me move this rock on the left and see what is here. (*He pushes aside the rock.*) It is a sandalwood box. (*He opens the box and finds a painting in it.*) A picture of the Goddess of Mercy! Amida Buddha! I will take this reverently to my study and worship it. That will be better than leaving it here. (*He takes the box away.*)

The sandalwood box in the rock
Served as shrine for the Goddess of Mercy.
The rock must be divine,
Brought from afar
To reveal predestined fate.
I shall burn incense to the image,
And keep a lamp shining before it,
So that the goddess may take pity on me.
I shall worship with all my heart.

Here I am back at the nunnery. I will put the painting in my study, and choose an auspicious day to pay homage to the goddess.

SCENE XX

THE GIRL'S SPIRIT COMES

(*Enter* Liu.)

LIU:

A rosy cloud has descended from the sky;
Fair as a flower the jade-like maiden smiles.
Who painted this sweet face
That gazes at me silently with love?

Since I found this portrait, I have been longing for the girl in it day and night. Now, late in the evening, I shall read the poem again and admire her loveliness. Could I but see her in a dream, that would be almost as good as an actual meeting. (*He unrolls the painting and gazes at it.*) What beauty! What expression there is in her face and in those eyes filled with love! They remind me of the lines: "The evening clouds fly with the lonely swan; the autumn pool is limpid as the sky."*

The evening breeze and sunset clouds
Beyond Peach Blossom Stream
Bring out her enchanting beauty,
Flawless and free from blemish
In this small painting by my red gauze window.
My heart goes out to her.

Ah, lady, I am consumed by longing for you!

She comes resplendent as the moon,
And my sorrow is boundless as heaven.

I used to lie in bed watching the moon, but in the last few days –

Her loveliness has eclipsed the moon
And set my heart in turmoil;
Day and night I think of her;

* From a poem by Wang Po of the Tang dynasty.

If not for fear of marring it,
I would embrace this painting.

Fate must have led me to find this. Let me read her poem again. (*He reads.*)

Reading these lines, I admire her skill anew;
Willow and plum are linked by destiny.
Spring has burgeoned from under the rock
And blossomed on the plum tree.

Let me pay homage to her. (*With incense in hand, he worships the painting.*)

Fortunate that I am!
In fancy I caress her blushing cheeks;
My love is not far away.

If only I could meet her and make love to her for a while, here far from my own home!

Alas that we are not in this painting together,
That I might lean beside her!

Ah, lady!

Would your ears beneath those cloudy locks
Listen to my words of love?
Incessant prayers and incantations
Make even boulders nod and heaven rain flowers,
Yet my worship cannot make this angel descend
Or consent to step lightly down.

(*A gust of wind makes the lamp flicker.*)

What a cold wind!

Sparks from the lamp endanger my scroll.

Well, then –

I had better go to sleep and dream of her.

(Liu *sleeps and* Li-niang's *spirit enters.*)

LI-NIANG:

I slept long and dreamlessly in the nether regions,
My great love unrequited.
Now my spirit is drawn to the painting in the moonlight,
And I hear his sighs in the wind.

I am Tu Li-niang's spirit. After my dream in the garden, I pined away and died. But before my death I painted a picture of myself which was buried under the rock, and on this portrait I wrote: "If one day I can join my scholar-lover, it will be near the plum and the willow." As my spirit wandered in the nunnery night after night, I heard a scholar calling to his love in the east chamber, and his sad voice moved my heart. Slipping quietly into his room, I found a small painting hanging there. When I looked at it carefully it was my portrait, and another verse was written on it signed by Liu Meng-mei* of Lingnan. The willow and the plum — surely this is fate! So I gained permission in the nether regions to resume my former dream on this fine night. The old memories distress me!

Beauty turned to dust sheds tears outside the window;
I seek my love again beneath the moon,
Turning my head to smooth my ruffled hair.

Ah, his chamber is in front.

I fear to mistake the room;
Let me stop and make sure it is he.

LIU (*reciting the poem in his sleep*): "If one day I can join my scholar-lover, it will be near the plum and the willow." Sweetheart!

LI-NIANG (*moved*): It is his voice!

My tears course down like rain;
He remembers my poor lines well.

Is he not asleep yet? (*She looks at* Liu, *who calls out again in his sleep.*)

* *Liu* means "willow," *meng* means "dream" and *mei* "plum.

It seems he was talking in his sleep;
Let me rap on the bamboo outside his window.

(Liu *is awakened and calls out.* Li-niang *is moved.*)

Now let my spirit approach him.

LIU: I hear a rapping on the bamboo. Is someone there or is it the wind?

LI-NIANG: It is I.

LIU: So late! Is it the abbess bringing tea? Please do not trouble!

LI-NIANG: It is not the abbess.

LIU: Can it be the young itinerant abbess?

LI-NIANG: It is not the young abbess either.

LIU: Strange! Who can it be? Let me open the door and see. (*He opens the door and looks out.*)

Whence comes this lovely girl?
This exquisite beauty takes my breath away.

(Li-niang *smiles and slips inside.* Liu *hastily closes the door. She greets him respectfully.)*

LI-NIANG (*curtsying*): Good evening, sir.
LIU: Good evening, madam. May I ask where you come from? And why you honour me with a visit at night?
LI-NIANG: Sir, you may guess.
LIU:

Are you the Weaving Maid from the Milky Way?
A fairy fallen from the ranks of angels?

LI-NIANG: How could immortals from heaven venture here?
LIU:

Are you a lovely young wife
Flying in secret from an ugly husband?

(Li-niang *shakes her head.*)

Or have we met by chance
Under some green willow?

LI-NIANG: We have never met before.
LIU:

Have you mistaken me for another man,
Or come to the wrong door?

LI-NIANG: No, I am not mistaken.
LIU: You must want to borrow a light then.

Walking at night without a lamp,
You come to my gauze window for a light.

LI-NIANG:

I am no fairy scattering flowers from heaven,
Nor come to borrow a candle to read by night;
I am no wanton or woman of easy virtue,
No young and lonely widow;
But once you had a dream of peonies, sir. . . .

LIU (*reflecting*): Yes, I did have such a dream.

LI-NIANG:

The golden oriole has come to the willow now;
If you want to know where I live,

It is not far –

A few houses to the east.

LIU (*thinking*): Yes. One evening in the garden I saw you walking there.
LI-NIANG: That is right.
LIU (*aside*): Amazing! Can such beauty be mortal? What shall I do? – I have come across this priceless pearl at midnight!

This breath-taking, unearthly beauty
Smiles enchantingly beside the silver candle.
The moon is bright;
What star has dropped from heaven?
What jewelled guest comes this cold night to my house?
What angel has come down to mortal men?
I shall trim the candle by the window,
And pass the night in conversation with her.

LI-NIANG: I have been longing to come to you.

Like a flower in some lonely valley,
You made me blossom early in one night.
You should know I am a maid
Of good family.
Bashful I was and shy
By the Peony Pavilion and the rock.
Now while the breeze is fanning your study window,
I have come to accompany you on this fine night.
We should value this cool breeze and brilliant moon.

I have a favour to ask. Don't be angry, sir!
LIU (*smiling*): Please speak quite frankly.
LI-NIANG: I am giving you my precious self, and shall be content if you do not despise my love.
LIU (*smiling*): How could I forget you?
LI-NIANG: And another thing: you must let me leave before cockcrow. And you must not see me off, for the morning wind is chilly.

LIU: I agree to all this. May I just ask your name?
LI-NIANG (*sighing*):

Flowers have roots and jade is hewn from a block;
But if I speak I shall cause you great alarm.

LIU: I implore you to come every night then!
LI-NIANG: Now let us taste the first fruit of our love.

SCENE XXV

THE RESURRECTION

(*Enter* Scabby, *nephew of the Abbess, carrying a pickaxe.*)

SCABBY: I am Scabby Turtle of Plum Blossom Nunnery. The young scholar has asked the abbess to open Young Mistress Tu's grave. How odd! He says the young lady wants to marry him here. Well, never mind whether it is true or not. I have brought some sacrificial offerings to hang on the rock, and some incense to burn.

(*Enter the* Abbess *with wine, accompanied by* Liu.)

ABBESS:

Where is the pretty maid?
A west wind blows the grave
And green grass withers;
The ballad is sung,
The girl will return to life;
The night-jar cries
On the far bank of the stream;
Sadness departs,
And the dream draws near its end.

LIU: Here we are at the back garden, lady abbess. The pavilion is half in ruins, the whole place is overgrown with thorns and brambles. Instead of her embroidered girdle I see only flowering vines, and the green grass reminds me of her silken skirt. I remember finding the painting by

that rock. I move as if in a dream and am at a loss. What shall I do?

ABBESS: Be patient, sir. That mound under the plum tree is her grave.
LIU: My heart will break. Ah, my love! (*He weeps.*)
SCABBY: Why cry? This is a time for action. (*He burns the sacrificial paper.*)
LIU (*bowing*): Angels and local deities that watch over the earth, display your divinity and sacred power! Today we shall open the grave to find Li-niang – not dead but alive! Open the grave!
ABBESS and SCABBY (*digging*):

We dig into the solid earth.
Are you there, young mistress, in this lonely grave?

LIU: Be very careful. (*He looks.*) Here is the coffin.
SCABBY (*dropping his pickaxe in fright*): The officer, did you say? We are dead men!
LIU (*holding up his hand*): Hush!

(*Inside the grave* Li-niang *groans.*)

ALL (*startled*): The ghost uttered a cry!
LIU: We must not frighten her.

(*They bend down to open the coffin.*)

ABBESS: The nails are rusty and broken; the lid is open. Has the young lady gone?

(*The girl groans again and* Liu *helps her out.*)

LIU: Here she is still. What a miraculous fragrance! As lovely as in life!

See, the lid is soiled with earth,
But in the cavity there are no maggots,
And the painted wood kept her warm
Where her beauty lay half way to the nether regions.
The earth's five colours have preserved her flesh. (*He helps her to sit up.*)
Tenderly I support her drowsy head –

*The pearl in her mouth must not be spoiled.**

(Li-niang *opens her eyes and sighs.*)

ABBESS: The young lady has opened her eyes.

LIU: Thanks to Heaven!

LI-NIANG:

Is this a dream?
Of a sudden my spirit wakes. (She shades her eyes.)
The sunlight dazzles my eyes,
I am afraid the wind will carry me off.

LIU: She is afraid of the wind. What shall we do?

ABBESS (*supporting her*): Give her some of the cordial in Peony Pavilion.

LIU: Quickly bring heated wine! (*He mixes a cordial with the wine and makes her drink it.*)

Pour this potent drug down her throat. (She retches.)
Ah, she cannot keep it down.

Another sip, sweetheart!

Just three more sips. (He looks at her.)

Good!

Spring has returned to her face.

LI-NIANG (*looking round*): Who are these men?

Why are these strangers
Taking me from my grave?

LIU: I am Liu Meng-mei.

LI-NIANG:

I see him indistinctly.
Is this the scholar of the plum and willow?

LIU: Here is the abbess to vouch for me.

ABBESS: Do you still know me, mistress?

(Li-niang *looks at her but says nothing.*)

ABBESS:

Newly wakened, you do not know me.

LIU:

Do you remember the garden?

* Precious objects like jade or pearls were often placed in the mouth of the dead.

(Li-niang *says nothing.*)

ABBESS:

Her recollection of the dream has faded.

LI-NIANG: Where is Master Liu?

(Liu *answers her and* Li-niang *recognizes him.*)

LI-NIANG: Ah, you have kept your word!

I thank you for seeking a snake in the undergrowth,
And waiting for a hare by the tree.

Keep the jewels in the coffin, but throw everything else into the pool.

ALL (*throwing away the unlucky objects*): Faugh!

LI-NIANG:

Still drowsy, fleeing from the nether regions,
My misty shadow returns at last to its form.

ALL: How you must have suffered, sleeping for three long years!

LI-NIANG:

The years slipped by,
But I fear a third of my beauty
Has turned to dust.

LIU: It is cold here, lady, in the wind and dew. You must not linger here. Let us help you to the nunnery where you shall rest well.

(*Exeunt.*)

SCENE XXVI

THE LOVERS MARRY AND DEPART

(*Enter* Chen, *the tutor.*)

CHEN:

Deep the courtyard with quiet steps,
Where shadows of flowers stir above green moss. (He knocks at the gate.)
Is anybody there?

VOICE OFF: Who is it?

CHEN:

Master Chen to see Master Liu.

VOICE OFF: Coming!

CHEN:

Strange — a woman's voice through the window!
And though she answers,
No one opens the door. (He knocks again.)

LIU: Who is it?

CHEN: I, Chen Tsui-liang.

(The door is opened and they greet each other.)

LIU:

Your carriage honours my gate:
I am sorry to make you wait —
I was not dressed.

CHEN:

I am somewhat astonished.

LIU:

By what?

CHEN:

This is no fairyland,
Why should the wind
Waft a woman's voice to the courtyard?

ABBESS: So Master Chen is here!

LIU: Master Chen heard a woman's voice. It must have been yours.

ABBESS: I understand.

Praying for immortality,
We have a young nun in our nunnery.

CHEN: The same that was here lately?

ABBESS: No, another.

CHEN: Excellent. Your nunnery is prospering. This is thanks to the protection of Li-niang's spirit. I have come to invite you to visit her grave tomorrow. I shall prepare some food. Goodbye for the present.

This is no courtesy call:
I come to appoint a time
To pour a libation over the lady's grave.

LIU:

It is kind of you to ask me.
The abbess has no tea to offer you,
But I shall repay your call immediately.

CHEN:

Please do not trouble. (Exit.)

LIU: Good, Master Chen has gone. Please ask the lady out.

(The Abbess *comes in supporting* Li-niang.)

ABBESS: Here's a fine ado! A fine ado! Tomorrow Master Chen is going to the young lady's grave. When this secret is out, the young lady will be accused of immoral behaviour, her family will be condemned for not bringing up their daughter properly, the gentleman will be mocked for falling in love with a ghost, and I shall be punished as a grave-robber. What's to be done?

LI-NIANG: Yes, lady abbess, what's to be done?

ABBESS: This gentleman is going to Hangchow for the examination, young mistress. You may as well marry now, tell the boy to hire a boat, and sail away this very night so that they cannot trace you. What do you say?

LI-NIANG: I am willing.

ABBESS: Here is some wine. The pair of you must bow to Heaven and Earth.

(They bow and accept the wine.)

LIU:

Three years have passed like a dream,
Now we are lovers in the world of men,
Who marry, sharing a single golden cup,
This wine is no libation to the dead,
But brings roses to her cheeks.

LI-NIANG (*deeply moved*):

I pined away and lay beneath the ground;
Three years passed like a drunken dream.

ABBESS:

Now phoenixes are singing in harmony —
We need not be surprised by her earthly form.

(Enter Scabby, *mooring a boat.)*

SCABBY: The boat is at the wharf. The young lady and gentleman can go on board.

ABBESS (*bidding them farewell*): You had better go now. Take good care of yourselves.

LIU: I need someone to look after my wife — will you be kind enough to come with us? When I am appointed to a post I shall pay you well.

ABBESS: But I am quite unprepared! (*Aside.*) Once the truth comes out I shall be in trouble. I had better leave after all. (*To* Liu.) Very well, sir. Just give my nephew a present and tell him to act as care-taker in my absence. Then I will go with your young lady.

SCABBY: As you like.

LIU: I will give him this gown. (*He takes off his gown.*)

SCABBY: Thank you, sir. When all is known, who will take the blame?

LIU: Just say you knew nothing about it.

SCABBY: All right then. Goodbye.

The scabby boy has become a nun,
And the abbess a lady's maid. (*Exit.*)

(The others board the boat.)

LIU:

The boat leaves Nanan by night,
Bearing away twin flowers on a single stem.

(Li-niang *weeps.*)

LIU: Why do you shed tears?

LI-NIANG:

At the thought of the last three years
When I lay underground;
The scented pouch was soiled,
The gold pin muddied.
I fear we may be parted again
And never fulfil our desire.

TOGETHER:

Resurrected from the dead,
Our hearts are stirred and glad.

ABBESS: It is late now. We should moor, and you can sleep.

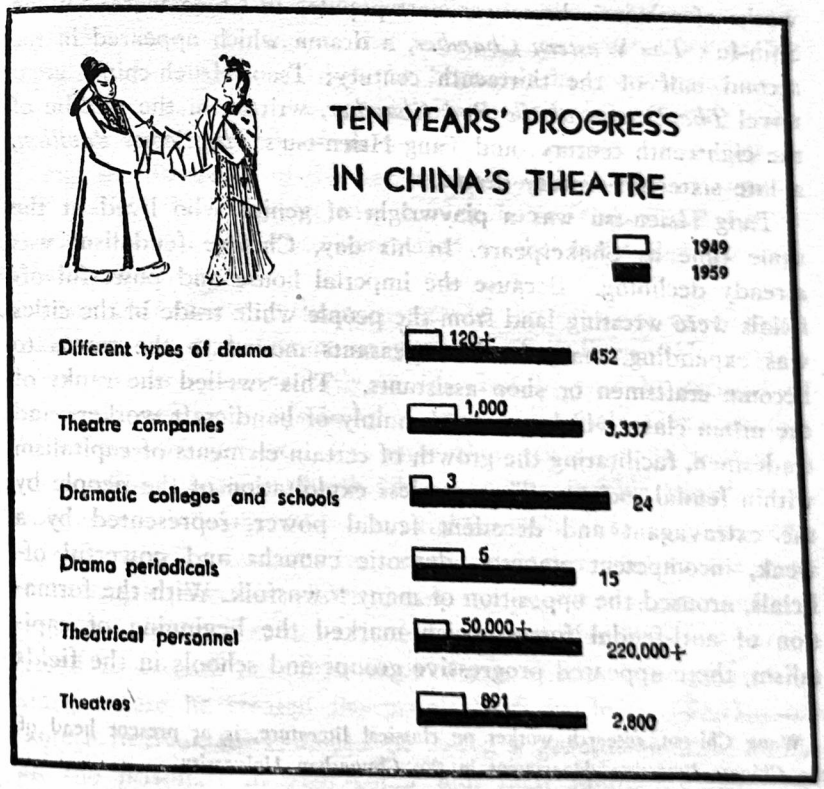
LIU:

Our deep-rooted love is a debt that must be paid.

LI-NIANG:

Gone now is the lonely grave
Where I longed for my husband.
We have wrested life from death,
And our love is as deep as the ocean.

Translated by Yang Hsien-yi
and Gladys Yang
Illustrations by Jen Shuai-ying



WANG CHI-SSU

Tang Hsien-tsu, Great Sixteenth Century Dramatist

Between the thirteenth and the eighteenth century the three works of romantic literature most popular in China were: Wang Shih-fu's *The Western Chamber,* a drama which appeared in the second half of the thirteenth century; Tsao Hsueh-chin's great novel *The Dream of the Red Chamber,* written in the middle of the eighteenth century; and Tang Hsien-tsu's *The Peony Pavilion,* a late sixteenth-century drama.

Tang Hsien-tsu was a playwright of genius who lived at the same time as Shakespeare. In his day, Chinese feudalism was already declining. Because the imperial house and powerful officials were wresting land from the people while trade in the cities was expanding, many landless peasants moved to the towns to become craftsmen or shop assistants. This swelled the ranks of the urban class, which consisted mainly of handicraft workers and tradesmen, facilitating the growth of certain elements of capitalism within feudal society. The ceaseless exploitation of the people by the extravagant and decadent feudal power, represented by a weak, incompetent emperor, despotic eunuchs and powerful officials, aroused the opposition of many townsfolk. With the formation of anti-feudal forces which marked the beginning of capitalism, there appeared progressive groups and schools in the fields

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of philosophy, politics and literature. Tang Hsien-tsu was the leader of the Linchuan School, a progressive school of drama at that time.

To enforce its control during this period, the feudal ruling class brought stronger pressure to bear on the people, and women especially were the victims of oppression. The feudal authorities demanded of women absolute obedience to their fathers and husbands. From childhood girls were confined to the house, seldom allowed out of the gate. If the man to whom a girl was betrothed died, she might have to live in his family's house as a widow, or her father and brothers might force her to commit suicide. The story of Saint Tan-yang, widely known at the time, was probably the basis of *The Peony Pavilion* and affords a good example of the unhappy fate of women under feudal oppression. Tan-yang was the daughter of Prime Minister Wang Hsi-chueh, who was Tang Hsien-tsu's patron. Her betrothed died before their marriage, and according to feudal morality she was not free to love any other man. However, this ingenious girl pretended to be possessed by a spirit so that she began to be worshipped as a saint. This gave her the opportunity to have a love affair with a young scholar, with whom she secretly eloped. Her father, fearing the disclosure of this secret would spoil the family reputation, tricked his daughter into coming home and forced her to commit suicide. He then announced to the world that she had become an immortal.

Tang Hsien-tsu was born in 1550 in the province of Kiangsi, noted for its manufacture of porcelain and linen. He won a reputation as a writer early in life, but because he refused to flatter powerful officials he did not pass the palace examination till he was thirty-three. For more than ten years he worked in minor official posts in South China, and among his friends were enlightened scholars and playwrights. While serving in some humble capacity in Nanking, he wrote a memorial to the court criticizing a powerful minister, and for this he was demoted and sent to Leichow Peninsula in Kwangtung. Later he was transferred to a small post in a mountainous district in southern Chekiang where he treated the people with kindness. During one lantern festival, for example, he issued a general amnesty so that all the prisoners in gaol could join their families. Since such

leniency was not in accordance with the government policy, after this term of office he was dismissed.

In Nanking he wrote *The Purple Hairpin,* a dramatized version of the well-known Tang dynasty story *Prince Huo's Daughter,* a romantic tale about a poet and a courtesan. After his dismissal and return home, thanks to the vicissitudes of his political career he had a deeper understanding of reality, and by now his literary gifts had matured. This was when, in 1598, at the age of forty-eight, he wrote his moving masterpiece *The Peony Pavilion.* He subsequently wrote two more plays: *The Governor of the Southern Tributary State* and *The Dream of Hantan.* In 1617, the year after Shakespeare's death, this great Chinese dramatist died in his home at Linchuan. Because he had a brilliant imagination and a strong resentment against the society of his day, his poetry and prose contain many description of dreams. The first two of his four plays incorporate dreams as important episodes in the love story, while in the last two he describes the corruption and stupidity of the official world as a dream. This is why later critics grouped these plays together as the "Four Dream Dramas." The drama of that period, known as *chuan-chi,* had been popular since early in the fourteenth century. The traditional Chinese theatre was highly developed by the thirteenth century; but since China was then divided into north and south, the southern drama had different music, tunes and stage conventions from the northern drama. The music of the latter developed mainly during the time when nomadic tribes from the north were invading China proper. Originally played on horseback in the steppes, the tunes were loud and stirring with a quick tempo, and the musical accompaniment was largely played by lutes, fiddles and other stringed instruments. The southern music originated in China proper, largely as chamber music; hence the tunes were softer and had a slower tempo; the favourite instruments were flutes and pipes. The northern drama generally had four acts and one singing part only, either male or female. The southern drama was much longer, sometimes running into fifty or sixty scenes, and its minor characters sang in addition to the hero and heroine, either singly or in unison. Thus in some respects the southern drama was freer and broader in scope than the northern. The *chuan-chi* developed from the southern drama, but adopted certain good features of

the northern drama. For example, when the plot was heroic or tragic the actor, if a man, might sing a northern tune. After *chuan-chi* became popular, both the southern and the northern drama declined.

The main theme of *The Peony Pavilion* centres around Tu Li-niang. Like Tsui Ying-ying in *The Western Chamber* and Lin Tai-yu in *The Dream of the Red Chamber,* Tu Li-niang is one of the heroines in literature best known to young Chinese readers. She first appears as a quiet young lady of a conservative aristocratic family, but after strolling in the garden in spring she is deeply affected by the beauty of nature and longs to blossom freely like the flowers in the sunlight, to sing freely in the breeze like the mating orioles and swallows. Since her desire is unattainable in that society, she feels strong resentment. Dressed in lovely silks and about to visit the garden, she sings:

> All my life I have loved beauty,
> But on this fine spring day
> No one sees how enchanting I look.

When she returns from the garden and thinks of her marriage, she laments:

> As daughter of a prominent family,
> I must make a suitable match;
> So my youth is wasted.

This was the common complaint of the majority of girls in feudal China. Indeed, this scene brings out very thoroughly their craving for freedom, their hatred for artificiality and sham.

After Li-niang's return from the garden and her dream of the young scholar, she cannot sleep. The next day she goes back to the garden in search of her dream. Then, pining for the man of her dream, she falls ill and dies. This may be hard for modern readers to understand; but actually it was quite natural for a girl of a respectable feudal family, unable to meet young men in real life, to idealize a young man seen in a dream. Through the thoroughly typical character of Li-niang, the author gives profound expression to the truth that in feudal society a young woman could find no satisfaction in love.

In her life, checked by her parents, Li-niang is denied happiness; but after her death and her parents' departure she gains her desire.

Here Tang Hsien-tsu uses a romantic approach to encourage young people to struggle for their ideal and to strive for happiness, even if it means sacrificing their lives. In his preface he says: "Is there a woman in the world more steadfast in love than Tu Li-niang? . . . She falls in love not knowing why, yet remains true. The living girl dies for love, the dead girl comes to life again for love. If not for this, she could not symbolize perfect love." Here he brings out clearly the strongly typical quality of his heroine. For three centuries and more, many girls have been inspired by Li-niang to devote their lives to the search for freedom, happiness and love. And precisely because of this, many feudal moralists detested Tang Hsien-tsu so implacably that they slandered him and declared that he had gone to the darkest Hell to suffer torments.

Li-niang loves all that is beautiful in life, and is unwilling to let her own beauty and gifts be wasted. This is well exemplified in the scene "The Painting of the Portrait." Firm in her affection and loving life dearly, even at the point of death she bids her maid open the window so that she may see the moon. When she knows that she is about to die, she tells the maid to hide her portrait among the rocks in the garden, for even now she has not abandoned hope. Li-niang's strong character was bound to make a great impression on readers in feudal China, inspiring them to strive for emancipation, to love life, to be steadfast in their search for freedom and love and in their hatred for the feudal forces which tried to thwart all the desires and aspirations of youth. Li-niang's parents and her tutor Chen Tsui-liang are personifications of feudal morality, who murder the younger generation while deluding themselves into thinking that they have the young people's happiness at heart.

Apart from the main theme outlined above, *The Peony Pavilion* contains a number of innuendoes and thrusts at evils in feudal society. For example, when the young scholar goes to take an examination in Hangchow, the examiner is described as a man with a good eye for valuable jewels but none for literature. Again, when Li-niang is cross-examined at the imperial court, she says: "I saw fearful demons in Hell, but they were less terrifying than these palace guards." These are merely two examples of the author's sharp criticism of the greed of the government examiners and the cruelty of the ruling class.

In Tang Hsien-tsu's time there were two schools of drama. One was the Wuchiang School headed by Shen Ching of Wuchiang, who paid more attention to the rules of poetry and music than to the content and dramatic effect. The other was the Linchuan School headed by Tang Hsien-tsu, who considered the emotional appeal of the theatre as paramount and the rules of poetry and music as secondary. He took his writing extremely seriously. It is told of him that when he was writing this play he was sometimes so moved by the characters in it that he would go to a quiet spot to shed tears. After the publication of *The Peony Pavilion,* some young women tried by every means to gain a glimpse of this playwright who could express their thoughts so well. One girl who died of a broken heart like Li-niang begged her family when she was dying to put a copy of this play in her grave. The great popularity of Tang Hsien-tsu's work made the Wuchiang School of drama lose ground.

Three years ago, when we celebrated the 340th anniversary of Tang Hsien-tsu's death, he was commemorated both in his birthplace in Kiangsi and in Shanghai, and many local companies staged *The Peony Pavilion.* Of course, most of the problems raised in this play no longer exist in China since liberation. But young people today still love this work, for the picture it gives us of the life and struggle of young lovers in the dark ages of feudalism deepens our love of our new society and our hatred for the backward ideas left over from the past.

Folk Tales of the Boxers Uprising

This year is the sixtieth anniversary of the Boxers Uprising, and here are three folk tales still told in the North China villages where the uprising took place. After the Opium War of 1840 with the British, the imperialists and their agents poured into China, the government then ceded more and more sovereign rights to foreign powers, and there was immediate danger of a partition of the country. The people suffered great hardships but would not yield to the imperialists, and all over China there arose patriotic movements to resist the aggressors. The Boxers, or Yi Ho Tuan, were a powerful anti-imperialist peasant force. The "foreign devils" in these tales are the imperialists and their agents whom the Chinese people opposed, while the peasant heroes appear as supermen — an artistic exaggeration expressing the people's longing for strong champions.

The Iron Man*

Once there was a fearless young fellow called Tieh Erh-leng, a tiller of the soil. He was poor enough to begin with, this Tieh Erh-leng, and poorer still after the tax-collectors came down upon him for grain and money; so when there was a great drought in the sixth month of that year matters became really desperate!

As the crops shrivelled and died, Tieh was just as worried as everyone else. But one day he had an idea. He went to Dragon King Temple at the end of the village and wagged his finger at the Dragon King:

* This story was told in 1954 by Tung Yao, a ninety-two-year-old peasant of Antzu County, Hopei.

"Listen to me, Dragon King! I've two things to say. First, I give you three days to send a good fall of rain; secondly, I want to be changed into a man whom nobody dares trample underfoot! If you agree, well and good. If not, three days from now I'll tear down your temple!"

Well, now! In those days there was a saying: Good men build temples, evil men destroy them. Anyone who tore down a temple was asking for trouble.

But do you know what? Tieh's threat had some effect: that night the Dragon King appeared to him in a dream.

"Tieh Erh-leng!" said the Dragon King. "Whatever you do, you mustn't tear down my temple. You shall have your wish – or rather, one of them. Which would you prefer, a good fall of rain or strength so great that no sword or bullet can harm you?"

Tieh thought: If there's a good rain and we get in a crop, it will only be taken away from us by the officials. If I have enough strength no one will dare to bully me. "All right!" he said. "Give me strength so great that no sword or bullet can harm me."

"That's easy. Starting tomorrow, the sky will be overcast for three whole days: there will be thunder and lightning but no rain. Just go to the river bank south of the village and stay there for three days and three nights."

"Three days and nights are nothing," said Tieh. "I wouldn't mind thirty."

The next day Tieh rose early and went to the river. At once the sky grew black as the bottom of a pan; the next instant lightning flashed and thunder crashed. The lightning struck Tieh and burned him, the thunderbolts smashed right on him! He saw stars, his heart and belly stung like fire, from head to foot he felt stabbing, shooting pains. In agony, he crawled to the river and thirstily gulped the water. So three bitter days and three bitter nights went by.

Suddenly, on the fourth morning, the sky cleared. And suddenly Tieh felt as if he were walking on air. Striding towards the village he ran full tilt into a lad. "Hey, brother!" cried Tieh. "Go and fetch a chopper, will you?"

"What do you want it for, elder brother?" asked the boy.

"Bring a big, sharp chopper and take a whack at me – any place you like."

"Are you mad?" The lad backed fearfully away.

Tieh lost his temper. "If you won't do this for me, I'll do it for you!"

The lad's hair stood on end, he took to his heels. "Tieh Erh-leng's gone mad!" he shouted as he ran. "He wants to kill me! Help!" The whole village turned out to see what the noise was about. They surrounded the boy and asked what the trouble was. One old man said: "Tieh Erh-leng is straight: he's never done a crooked thing in his life. If he wants you to hack at him, he must have his reasons. Give him a couple of taps with the blunt side of the chopper and see what happens – at worst you can't do more than bruise him."

By now Tieh had come alongside. Feeling safety in numbers, the lad took the old man's advice. He tapped Tieh with the blunt side of the chopper.

"That's no use!" bellowed Tieh. "Hit harder!" The lad put a little strength into the next blow. "Pah! A flea-bite!" shouted Tieh. "Can't you do better than that?" The lad hit harder and harder, but still Tieh went on complaining while the villagers stood gaping. At last the lad grew frantic, and curiosity got the better of him. Flicking over the chopper, he struck this time with the sharp side, leaving a white mark on Tieh's skin. He swung the chopper and smashed it down again. Soon he was sweating, the blade of the chopper was bent, but not a single hair of Tieh's body was hurt! The villagers cried out in wonder: "A man of iron!" So Iron Man became Tieh's name after that.

"All I wanted was to test my strength," he told them. "My wish has really come true. So much the better. Next time the tax-collectors come demanding grain or money, don't give them a thing. If they ask why, tell them that's what the Iron Man said. If that doesn't satisfy them, send them to me!"

With such backing, his neighbours were afraid of nothing. And this wasn't the only village to follow his lead: once the news had spread many other villages started doing what the Iron Man said.

And this brought a hornet's nest about his ears.

One day a troop of government soldiers surrounded his house so closely that not a drop of water could have got in. As soon as the Iron Man knew this he walked out, and the moment he reached the gate – snap! – an iron chain clamped his neck. The

soldier holding the chain started walking off. But the Iron Man simply blinked and stood his ground. One soldier could not budge him, no more could two. Yelling and howling, three dozen or more started tugging; but they might have been so many ants pulling at a mountain – not a hair's breadth did the Iron Man move. They tugged till their faces were black and their ears were red. Then the Iron Man threw back his head and the chain was shattered. The soldiers fell flat on their faces, on the ground.

Then, shouting and cursing, they drew their swords and struck out. The first stroke nearly broke their wrists, the second bent their swords, the third snapped their blades and sent them flying! By now the Iron Man was angry too. "Who asked you to come here?" he shouted. "Stop wasting my time! Get out!" Raising his fists, he sent the soldiers scuttling east and west, running for their lives. The Iron Man gave chase.

The soldiers ran to the *yamen* as fast as their legs would carry them. They had barely made their report to the magistrate when in charged the Iron Man.

The Iron Man shook his fist at the magistrate. "I left you in peace – why did you send men to arrest me? All right, now I'll finish you up!" He lunged forward and his fist shot out. Bang! The terrified magistrate shrank back as his desk was smashed into splinters.

The magistrate fell on his knees and started kowtowing. "Spare my unworthy life!"

"Not I!" The Iron Man raised his fist again.

The magistrate started sobbing. "Spare me!"

With a scornful laugh, the Iron Man said: "On one condition – stop asking us for grain and money."

"B-but . . . I can't do that!"

"You can't? Then I shall kill you."

"Help! No! Listen to me! The foreigners have defeated our court in battle. We owe those foreign countries money, and it must be paid."

"What foreigners?"

"The men from overseas."

"Where are these men from overseas?"

"There are some in this town – the biggest shops are theirs, and they have churches where they preach their gospel. . . ."

"You officials and your court have tried our patience too long. You are nothing but cowards. Watch me go and finish them off."

The Iron Man strode straight out of the *yamen*. When he saw a foreign devil, he caught him and tore off his head. Soon the whole town was in an uproar. All who had suffered at the hands of the foreign devils flocked to the Iron Man. And when the foreign devils saw that China had produced such a superman, those not yet caught fled in terror for their lives.

The foreign devils had been frightened away. The magistrate dared not levy any more taxes. The people had vented their anger and raised their heads. The Iron Man gave courage to every heart.

But the foreign devils came back with troops to China.

There were many more of them this time, all armed with foreign rifles and foreign cannon. They invaded Tientsin and pushed along the railway to Peking, fighting and looting as they went, bringing great bitterness to the common people.

As soon as the Iron Man knew this, he announced: "We must stop the foreign devils from stealing what belongs to China, from riding roughshod over the people of China, from occupying the land that belongs to China! Come with me now, and bring your swords, axes and spears. Death to the foreign devils!"

Since folk trusted him and looked up to him, they were only too willing to do as the Iron Man said. Taking weapons, they followed him. In fact, his forces grew apace, for at each village they passed more men swelled their ranks – soon there was a sea of men!

A day came when they reached Langfang.* Hordes of foreign devils were marching on Peking, and at Langfang the Iron Man met the enemy! At once he stepped forward and blocked their way. The foreigners had beaten the government soldiers as easily as wind blows away the dew, and they were surprised to be stopped by an unarmed man at the head of a crowd of peasants. Scornful and angry, they prepared to fight.

But the Iron Man said to their officer: "Don't be in such a hurry. The Chinese are a reasonable people. If we're going to fight, let's decide who's to attack first – you or us?"

The officer was puzzled – what was this polite palaver before a battle? He said: "We're here to fight China and occupy China. We'll attack first!"

"How?" asked the Iron Man.

"The sight of a Chinese makes us want to kill him. Since you have the insolence to block our way, we shall kill the lot of you."

"H'm, that sounds fierce! What weapons will you use?"

"Rifles."

"If your foreign rifles are no good?"

"We have cannon."

"If your foreign cannon are no good?"

The officer was livid! He could hardly wait to give the order to fire.

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* A small town on the railway between Tientsin and Peking.

"I'd like a taste of those toys of yours, your foreign rifles and cannon," said the Iron Man. "But you needn't fire at such a crowd of us: first try them out on me!" He made his men withdraw, and stood there as a target for the foreign troops. "Try your foreign rifles first!" He slapped his chest.

His fearlessness goaded them to fury. Bang, bang, bang! A volley rang out. But do you know what? The bullets simply made white marks on his skin and whizzed away, sending off sparks. After some time the foreign devils stopped, their eyes nearly starting from their heads.

The Iron Man slapped his chest again. "Try your foreign cannon now!"

Fuming with rage, the foreign troops trained their cannon on him. Boom, boom! But do you know what? When the shells struck the Iron Man, a column of smoke shot right up into the sky, sputtering, crackling and making a braver show than the fireworks at New Year.

After a furious burst of cannon-fire, the foreign troops were sure the Iron Man must be dead. They stopped firing and had a look – there he was standing, exactly the same as before, except that his clothes were in rags and his face was blackened with smoke. His teeth gleamed white as he laughed at them!

The foreign devils began to be afraid.

The Iron Man took a step forward and grabbed a foreign rifle from one of them. Crack! – he broke the thing in two and laughed aloud. "This isn't even up to a beggar's stick!" He tossed the broken rifle aside and picked up a foreign cannon. After taking a look, he tightened his grip and – crash! – it smashed into smithereens. He laughed long and loud again. "This isn't as strong as a clod of Chinese earth!" He let the broken bits of the cannon fall.

The foreign devils were rooted to the ground with fear.

Then the Iron Man glared at them and cried: "What makes you think you can have it your own way in China? Have a good look: there's no weakling among all the Chinese here! Now that you've had your turn, we'll show you that Chinese aren't to be trifled with!" He waved to his men. "Come on – wipe out these devils!" Then brandishing swords, axes, choppers and spears, his men stepped forward with a roar like thunder.

The foreign devils were shaking in their shoes.

"If you dare attack us," protested the terrified officer, "when we've captured your empress dowager, she'll have you all killed."

"The empress, too, must do as we say," retorted the Iron Man.

"Listen to me!" said the officer. "We didn't come to China to fight you. Live and let live is our motto – why not let us pass?"

"If you didn't come to fight us, whom did you come to fight?"

"Your empress dowager and the Boxers."

"Why?"

"When we've given your empress dowager a good fright, she'll have to give us gold and silver and more concessions. We foreigners came to China with your empress dowager's approval. But since the Boxers keep killing us, we've brought troops to fight the Boxers."

"Why do the Boxers want to kill you?"

"I'll tell you why. They won't allow our merchants to make money in China, they won't let us preach the gospel in China, they won't allow us to look for treasures in China, they won't let us order the people of China about."

The Iron Man clenched his fist. "I'll tell you something! *We* are Boxers too!" His men raised a great shout: "Yes, *we* are Boxers! The Iron Man is our general!"

"Charge!" The Iron Man signed to his men and was the first to charge the foreign troops, seizing foreign rifles and foreign cannon with one hand, while dealing mighty blows with his other fist. His men streamed after him, thrusting, hacking, mowing down the enemy. Not till all the foreign devils were killed or wounded or had fled did they stay their hands. Then, the Iron Man at their head, they occupied Langfang and hoisted the great banner of the Boxers.

The next day the magistrate came in his sedan-chair with an escort to see the Iron Man.

With a smile, the magistrate said: "General Tieh, the empress dowager has sent you an edict."

"Let's hear it," said the Iron Man.

Now the capital had already been occupied by the foreigners who had put the empress dowager to flight. The imperial edict announced that the court intended to sue for peace, and there-

fore the Boxers must kill no more foreigners. The Iron Man was ordered to lay down arms.

"Hand that edict over to me!" In a rage the Iron Man snatched it and tore it to shreds. Pointing at the magistrate, he shouted: "Here we've already killed all these foreign devils, yet you want to sue for peace! You are a disgrace to China! Get out of here!" He aimed a kick at the magistrate which sent him flying eighty feet through the air like a ball of donkey-dung. Officials had such a healthy respect for the Iron Man by now that, leaving his sedan-chair, the magistrate fled with his followers, not daring to look behind.

Once back in the *yamen,* the magistrate wrote a memorial to the throne, and sent a horseman off with it that same night.

This memorial set the empress dowager worrying, and she consulted her most trusted ministers. One of them said: "This Iron Man must be an evil spirit sent to trouble the world. Isn't there a worthy Buddhist abbot appointed by Your Majesty to the Temple of the Guardian of the State? He has experience in casting out evil spirits. Why not send for him?"

At once the empress dowager sent for this abbot.

The abbot said: "A man like that will not submit to the laws till you destroy his strength. I have a charm here which, if burned to ashes and given him to eat, will enable us to chop off the fellow's head!"

"Let me go and see the Iron Man," proposed the minister. "I know how to handle him." He outlined his plan to the empress dowager, who appointed him a high commissioner. Then he rode off with an escort towards Langfang.

Half way there he met the Iron Man and his brothers.

The minister made haste to greet him. "Where are you going, General Tieh?"

The Iron Man responded angrily: "You spineless officials have let the foreign devils take our capital. Now that we've killed all the foreign devils behind us, we're on our way to Peking. We're going to kill the foreigners and drive them all away from the capital. They shan't have it their own way in China!"

The minister said with an ingratiating smile: "General Tieh, you are a hero, a true defender of the state! What a lucky meeting! The empress dowager sent me out with these troops to

find you. She wants your Boxers to join forces with us and march quickly to the capital to kill all the foreigners. Then she can return to her capital and the country will be at peace."

When the Iron Man heard this he answered gladly: "That sounds more like an empress dowager! You can count on me!"

Since dusk was falling, the minister and the Iron Man put up with the Boxers and soldiers at a large inn.

At once the minister ordered a feast and invited the Iron Man to drink with him. Men with no guile in their hearts do not suspect others – how could the Iron Man guess that the minister would slip the ashes of that charm into one of his dishes?

No sooner had the Iron Man eaten that dish than his heart began to burn, his head to reel, his eyes to grow dim and his limbs to falter. At once the minister showed his true colours. Coldly he laughed, and shouted: "Here, men! Cut off the Iron Man's head and take it to the empress dowager!"

So by this dastardly plot the Iron Man met his end.

That night when the Boxers were sleeping, the minister assembled his soldiers by stealth and ordered: "Put all these Boxers to the sword! Then we can make peace with the foreigners and the empress dowager can return to her capital."

The proverb says: "Easy to parry a spear-thrust in the open, but hard to evade an arrow shot in the dark." That is how this force of Boxers was defeated.

Tsung Lao-lu*

If it's stories about the Boxers you want, there's no end to them. But let me just tell you today about Tsung Lao-lu.

Tsung Lao-lu was a Boxer chief, who led his brothers to fight the foreign devils. When the allied forces of eight powers fought their way to Peking, all the villages hereabouts were occupied

* This story was also told by the old peasant Tung Yao.

by the foreign devils. And the Boxers were defeated. The empress dowager shook with fright like a mouse chased by a cat, the foreign devils ran wild all over the country, throughout the empire utter confusion reigned. And Tsung Lao-lu disappeared.

But what about the Dragon River? The reeds beside the river were emerald green, the wild flowers on its banks were red, the silver waves still gurgled as they flowed east, yet the surface was calm and unruffled. And there in broad daylight on the river an old man, as cool as you please, was catching fish.

Well, presently two dozen foreign devils came along. The old man threw them a glance and went on fishing. The foreign devils, wanting to cross the river, hailed him:

"Hey! Bring your boat here! Ferry us across!"

The old man shaded his eyes to peer at them.

"What do you want to cross the river for?"

"To arrest a man!"

"What man?"

"A fellow named Tsung."

The old fisherman laughed. "That's not so simple – China is full of Tsungs. I'm a Tsung myself."

"We're not going to take you – you're a fisherman."

The old fisherman laughed. "Whom then? There are not only more Tsungs in China than you could count, but Tsungs in every trade."

"Don't talk like a fool. It's Tsung Lao-lu we've come for! – After asking for days, we've heard that he's in hiding on the Dragon River. Hurry up and ferry us over. If he slips through our hands, we'll take you in his place."

The old fisherman laughed. "Why come for him of all people? He's a Boxer who spends his whole time killing foreign devils. Yes, you'll find this Chinese Tsung a hard nut to crack. If you're out to take him, you're like rats licking a cat's nose – asking to be killed. Just now Tsung Lao-lu told me he's tired after killing so many of you, he wants to rest for some days to recover his energy before he slaughters more of you. So long as you dare come to China to bully our people, he won't let you off!"

"You mean to say you know Tsung Lao-lu's whereabouts?"

"Would I be telling you this if I didn't know?"

"Where is he?"

"Far as the horizon – yet just before your eyes."

"What! Are you he?"

"I belong to the same clan. Tsung Lao-lu used to fish here on the Dragon River, he tilled this river bank, and he hasn't left the river now – he's recovering his energy in the reeds over there."

The foreign devils, nearly off their heads with joy, waved frantically to the old man. "Hurry up and ferry us across. Quick! If he runs away we'll take you in his place."

"He won't run away. I'm just afraid the few of you will be no match for him – he has mighty strength."

While speaking, the old man had brought his boat ashore. The foreign devils were so afraid that Tsung Lao-lu might run away that they scrambled aboard together, swamping the boat. Then they ordered the old man to punt them across. But he complained:

"You're packed so tight there's not even standing room for me – how do you expect me to punt?"

"Get started! You can manage somehow."

"It's not humanly possible – well, I'll have a try."

Propping his pole on the boat, the old man jumped into the water. With both hands on the stern, he bent his back and shoved. Overloaded as it was, as soon as the boat was afloat it started rocking. The foreign devils in alarm crowded together to let him steady the boat. Then without so much as a grunt, the old man swam steadily forward, pushing the craft before him. Once in mid-stream he gave a snort, heaved at the bottom of the boat and shouted:

"Go and feed the turtles!"

Splash! – the boat capsized! The old man seized hold of it and grabbed his pole. Another heave, another splash, and the boat was righted again, not having shipped a drop of water! He hoisted himself aboard and raised his pole. The foreign devils were floundering in the river, swallowing water as they sank to the bottom and struggled up again. As soon as a head showed above, crack went the pole! One by one he knocked them under. . . .

In less time than it takes to smoke a pipe, not a foreign devil's head could be seen! Standing with the pole in one hand, smoothing his beard with the other, the old man laughed aloud.

"Ah, you foreign devils, did you come to take Tsung Lao-lu or to find death at his hand? Too bad . . . had you only known it, I am Tsung Lao-lu!"

So he was indeed Tsung Lao-lu! After the Boxers disbanded he had come back to fish the Dragon River. And he lost no time, either in catching fish or in destroying the foreign devils.

The Fisherboy*

Once there was an old fisherman who owned nothing in the world but a fishing boat and a net. He fished the Dragon River by day, and slept in his boat moored by the bank at night. Indeed, it was a hard life the poor man led.

In the sixth month that year the river rose again; flood water brimmed its banks, waves broke many feet high. A lifetime on the Dragon River had taught the old fisherman that to venture out when the river was in spate spelled almost certain disaster – both boat and man would be lost in the angry waves. The old man fretted because he could not go fishing. And when another day went by but the water showed no sign of falling, he was too worried to sleep. He sat on the bank staring at the swirling torrent.

Suddenly, from the centre of the river a golden flame flared up to flash and sparkle over the selfsame spot. One moment all was bright, the next all was dark. What could it be – a water sprite or some treasure in the river? The fisherman cudgelled his brains. Bright one moment, dark the next, that ball of golden

* This story was told by Wang Wen-yu, a seventy-year-old peasant of Antzu County, Hopei.

fire did not vanish till dawn. The fisherman thought: "When I was a child I heard tell of a treasure in this river, which only those fishing day in and day out can see, and only a man of great courage can ever win. All my life I've worked hard; can it be that in my old age I've found a treasure?" The golden flame burned for three nights on end, and for three nights he sat like one bewitched, watching it.

"Well, to see if there are dates let's beat the tree!" On the fourth night the fisherman lengthened the rope of his net and fastened it round his waist. Then undaunted by the swirling, towering waves, not caring if his boat sank or he were drowned, he launched out into the river and rowed towards that golden fire.

It was touch and go with him! Once on the river his boat was sent staggering this way and that by the waves, and he broke out in a cold sweat; but taking a grip on himself he battled on. Coming at last within reach of the ball of flame, he cast his net; and since he was an old hand at fishing, the net fell neither to the right nor to the left but directly over the golden fire. Just then, though, a huge wall of water came roaring over, the boat veered and the waves rushed in! The next moment it must surely sink! The fisherman's heart was thudding like a drum, but he closed his eyes, gritted his teeth, and put all his strength into rowing out of the current till he reached the shore.

"That was a close thing!" He heaved a long sigh of relief as he moored and bailed out his boat. Then he untied the rope round his middle and slowly pulled in the net to see his catch.

It was a goldfish-bowl, the size of any ordinary bowl but made of white jade. On the bottom were carved two small goldfish with clear rippling water around them; a stem beside them climbed towards the rim of the bowl where on two large green lotus leaves nestled a great pink lotus flower; and on this flower sat a small barefoot fisherboy in a red jacket and green trousers, his hair combed in two tufts and a fishing-rod hugged to his chest.

That was a pretty toy! By the light of the moon the fisherman held it up this way and that, and could hardly bear to put it down. Though the fisherboy was only a carving on the side of a bowl, whenever the old man looked at him the boy seemed to be looking back – the fisherman laughed for joy.

Everything seems a novelty the first time you see it, but in no time the gilt wears off. Though the fisherman loved the bowl he couldn't eat it, and unless he went out fishing he would go hungry; so as soon as the water abated a little he set to work again, and after a tiring day slept soundly at night.

In the night, however, he was woken by a noise. Opening his eyes, he saw a stream of golden fire pour from his bowl in the grass on the river bank. As the golden fire cascaded out, the lotus seemed to rustle and come to life; the stem supporting the green leaves and the pink bloom began to grow; higher and higher it grew and curved gracefully down till the lotus leaves and flower were over the grass. The fisherboy had grown too and come to life! He stood up now on the lotus. Holding his rod, he parted his lips and called to the bowl with a smile:

Sway, fish-bowl, sway;
Play, water, play!

At once the bowl began to sway, and clear bubbles floated to the top. Again the fisherboy called to the bowl with a smile:

Flow, water, flow;
Go, goldfish, go!

At once ripples appeared and the water began to swirl with a merry gurgling sound, while at the same instant the fish came to life and darted swiftly round the bowl. Again the fisherboy called to the bowl with a smile:

Leap, goldfish, leap;
Sweep, water, sweep!

At once the goldfish leaped a good foot in the air, while the water swept eddying out of the bowl to cascade in all directions. As the goldfish started leaping up and down, the fisherboy picked up his rod. Next time they leaped, he cast his line and caught one. He jerked his rod up and down, so that as the fish soared up high and came sharply down it spouted golden water in all directions, and this cascade turned into countless golden bubbles which swirled off on the surging water over the grass. Then the fisherboy laughed with glee. After sporting with one fish for a time, he jerked his rod to shake it off, then promptly caught and

sported with the other, laughing all the while with glee. This he did several times. . . . Clear water eddied in all directions, the fish not hooked kept leaping, the hooked fish as it rose and fell spouted golden bubbles – and this went on till nearly dawn. Then the fisherboy, having sported to his heart's content, freed the fish on his line, hugged the rod to his chest again, and called to the bowl with a smile:

Drop, water, drop;
Stop, goldfish, stop!

At once the water stopped gushing, the goldfish stopped leaping; the next instant the great lotus raised itself up and little by little shrank back together with the stem, dwindling till it had shrunk back into the bowl. With a puff the golden fire vanished. Dawn broke.

With bated breath the fisherman had watched all night. Now he sprang up to seize the bowl and stare at it – it was just the same as before! But all around in the grass lay brilliant bubbles, in each of them a cluster of golden beans!

The fisherman, happier than words can tell, picked up a heap of these beans. He used them to set himself up and began to live well. And each night, the bowl poured out treasure so that the fisherman, after a life of toil, grew day by day more prosperous in his old age.

One day he took some gold beans to market to make some purchases. In town, he had just pulled a few beans from his pocket when who should come by but a foreign missionary, striding along as if he owned the place. At the sight of the gold beans he pulled up short. He asked to see them and peered at them closely. His mouth started watering.

"Where did you get these beans, old man?" he asked.

For an honest man to lie is harder than scaling heaven! The fisherman told the missionary how he had come by the beans. The missionary nodded, asked his name and where he lived, then handed back the gold beans and strode on his way.

The next day the blow fell!

The fisherman was just finishing a meal when in came two *yamen* runners.

"The magistrate's sent us to fetch you, old man," they said. "You're to come with us at once, bringing your fish-bowl."

"Why, sergeants, what does this mean? I've not robbed anyone or broken the law."

"There's a charge against you."

"Who'd bring a charge against me? Unless the Dragon King is angry with me for fishing every day in his river!"

"Bah! You're raving! It's not the Dragon King, it's not any Chinese either. The magistrate himself dare not offend the gentleman who has charged you. Come along! You'll understand when we get to the *yamen*."

In the *yamen,* seated in the great hall, the fisherman saw the magistrate respectfully entertaining the missionary who had accosted him the day before! Had this foreign devil charged him? The magistrate lost no time in opening the trial.

"Wretch! Do you have a fish-bowl of white jade?"

"Yes, Your Honour."

"Carved on the bowl are two goldfish in rippling water and a lotus on which is seated a small fisherboy – correct?"

"Yes."

"At night the lotus grows larger and the fisherboy comes to life, the water gushes out, the goldfish leap and spray out bubbles which turn into golden beans – correct?"

"That's right."

"Good. So there's no mistake." Indicating the missionary, the magistrate thundered at the fisherman: "Brigand! What insolence – to steal the treasure of this foreign scholar! Now did you steal it? Make haste and confess!"

"Your Honour, this fish-bowl is mine! Who says I stole it from this foreign devil? Heaven above! Never in all my life have I seen a foreign devil so dead to shame!" After this angry outburst, the fisherman explained to the magistrate how he had come by the bowl and how he had met the missionary the day before. After hesitating for a moment, the magistrate bowed to the missionary with an oily smile.

"Well, worthy sir, the empress dowager has decreed that Chinese involved in cases with foreigners may be tried by the foreigners – what is the best course to take in your honoured opinion?"

"There can be no doubt about this case!" The missionary looked down his nose at the fisherman. "Old man! We come to China to preach the gospel and to do good, not to rob you or cheat you. We speak nothing but the truth. That fish-bowl of yours is a treasure I brought from my own country; in fact it was made in my country. Having brought it here, I kept it in my church, but not long ago it disappeared! After searching for days I saw you yesterday with a handful of gold beans which I recognized. What have you to say for yourself?"

"What!" The fisherman was in a frenzy. "A fine scholar you are! You look like an educated man, but you act like a dirty scoundrel!"

The missionary complained to the magistrate: "It's bad enough the way you Chinese rob us – without this stubbornness and rudeness! Mind you punish this fellow properly for me! You must make him return the fish-bowl to me and confess; you must also post up a notice and sentence him – that's how to settle the case. We believe in getting at the truth in all things."

"You are right, sir." The magistrate bellowed at the fisherman: "Old brigand! Hand over that bowl! Make a full confession!"

"Why should I hand it over? This bowl comes from a Chinese river, a Chinese life was risked to get it out – why should I hand it over to this foreign devil?" Holding the bowl in one hand, the furious fisherman pointed at it with the other. "Tell me this! If this bowl was made in his country, as the man says, why is it that the fisherboy on a foreign bowl is dressed like a Chinese and looks Chinese?"

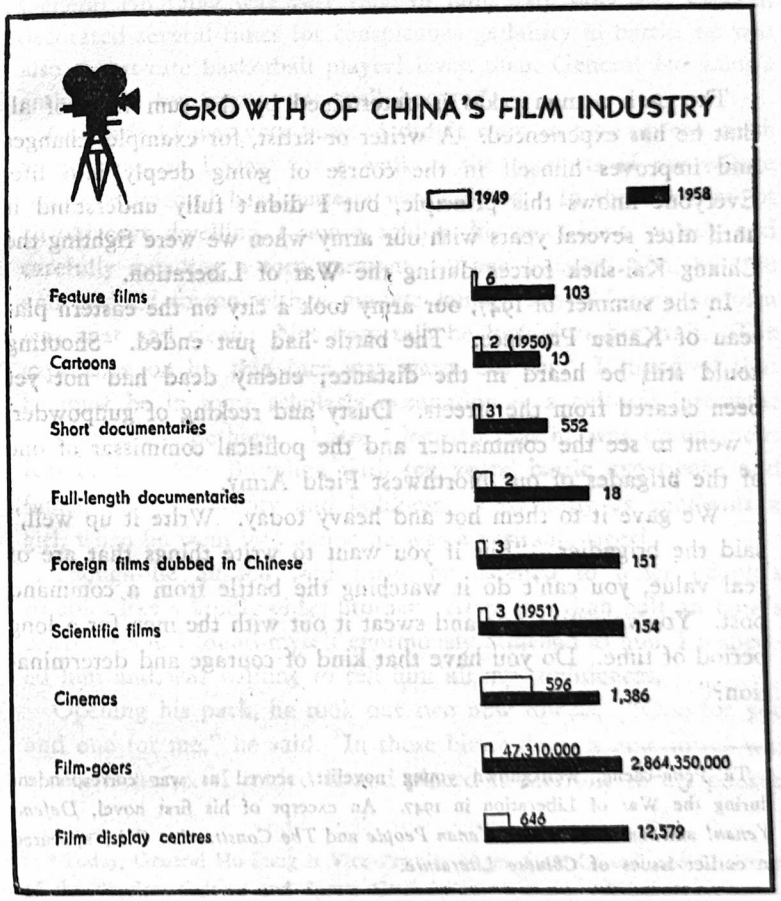
The magistrate and missionary could not open their mouths, like two rabbits who have been nibbling a sticky cake. After a pause, the foreign devil burst out: "Anyway, I mean to have the bowl! And I shall have it!" When the magistrate saw that the missionary was angry, he flared up too. "If you don't hand it over, you will be breaking the law!"

Such fury swelled the fisherman's heart that he shook with rage and fell senseless to the ground, smashing the bowl as he fell. But as the bowl was shattered the fisherboy jumped up from the fragments – alive! Standing in front of the old fisherman he flicked his rod, and at once grew tall and strong. He cast his line towards the missionary and hooked his upper jaw; he raised the rod and the missionary swung in mid-air; he played the rod up and down and the missionary flapped his hands and legs in space, howling and bellowing for help! Then the fisherboy swung his rod hard and the missionary soared up high into the sky, turning over and over till he disappeared!

Now the fisherboy flicked his rod and it shrank again. The magistrate, afraid it was his turn next, slithered down beneath his seat draped with a tiger-skin, and showing the whites of his eyes died of sheer terror!

By now the old fisherman had come to himself. The fisherboy helped him up, and side by side the old man and the boy walked out of the *yamen* gate, but where they went no one knows.

Translated by Gladys Yang
Illustrations by Liu Chi-yu



TU PENG-CHENG

What Makes Me Write

The path a man takes is determined by the sum total of all that he has experienced. A writer or artist, for example, changes and improves himself in the course of going deeply into life. Everyone knows this principle, but I didn't fully understand it until after several years with our army when we were fighting the Chiang Kai-shek forces during the War of Liberation.

In the summer of 1947, our army took a city on the eastern plateau of Kansu Province. The battle had just ended. Shooting could still be heard in the distance; enemy dead had not yet been cleared from the streets. Dusty and reeking of gunpowder, I went to see the commander and the political commissar of one of the brigades of our Northwest Field Army.

"We gave it to them hot and heavy today. Write it up well," said the brigadier. "But if you want to write things that are of real value, you can't do it watching the battle from a command post. You've got to live and sweat it out with the men for a long period of time. Do you have that kind of courage and determination?"

Tu Peng-cheng, well-known young novelist, served as war correspondent during the War of Liberation in 1947. An excerpt of his first novel, *Defend Yenan!* and his short stories, *Yenan People* and *The Construction Chief* appeared in earlier issues of *Chinese Literature.*

The commissar gazed at me fixedly, his sharp eyes seeming to penetrate into my very heart. He said nothing, probably fearing that too much encouragement might stir a young man to rashness.

Shouldering my pack, from there I proceeded to a regiment attached to the brigade. The regiment's commander and its political commissar had gone to inspect the companies. Comrade Li, chief of staff, was alone when I arrived.

Although born to a family of intellectuals, Li was big and stalwart, and as unpretentious as any worker. The only thing that distinguished him from the other soldiers was the red fountain pen clipped in his tunic breast pocket. It was said that General Ho Lung was very fond of him. Not only had Li been decorated several times for conspicuous gallantry in battle, he was also a first-rate basketball player! Even then, General Ho Lung's enthusiasm for sports was well known.*

Comrade Li was very busy. I didn't want to take up too much of his time, so I went for a walk in the outskirts of the village where regimental headquarters was billeted. In the doorway of an old cave dwelling, I saw a soldier, his head bent, quietly and carefully mending a torn garment. When I hailed him, he rose and nodded to me with a modest smile. His old grey uniform was neat and clean. Not very tall, he looked rather frail. The expression on his thin face was warm but shy. I supposed that he must be in some scholarly occupation — a cultural instructor or a secretary, perhaps. Later I learned that he was Commander Kai of the First Battalion with ten years' battle experience and famed for his tenacity and boldness. Ordinarily as gentle as a girl, when he went into action he was a veritable tiger!

Though he himself said little, he listened to other people's troubles like a kindly older brother. After less than half an hour's conversation, I found myself enormously attached to him. I respected him and was willling to tell him all my confidences.

Opening his pack, he took out two new towels. "One for you and one for me," he said. In those bitter days, a new towel was a rare treasure. I folded it and placed it carefully in my pocket.

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* Today, General Ho Lung is Vice-Premier of the State Council and Chairman of the Physical Culture and Sports Commission.

Not long after, our army moved on towards Yulin. One morning as we were crossing some high mountains and coming down into the desert region, three enemy planes appeared overhead. Our buglers sounded the air-raid warning, the mournful notes making me tense. I had been walking beside Battalion Commander Kai. Now, with one hand pressing on his holstered pistol, he waved the other and shouted to his men:

"Scatter and take cover!"

I looked up at the sky. The three enemy planes circled, then dived at us in a strafing run, their machine-guns spitting bullets that kicked up sand on all sides. A fighter's leg was snapped. A horse went down, its belly ripped open. I was frightened. Comrade Kai, lying beside me, threw a protecting arm around my waist. His bright friendly eyes seemed to say, "Steady. I'm here with you!"

Ashamed, I was very dissatisfied with myself for having lost control. Just then, a young messenger shouted to me, "You're on fire!" I looked. Smoke was rising from the left side of my tunic.

I swore. A burned tunic was a small matter. I could go around bare to the waist if need be. But in my tunic pocket were my notebook, a fountain pen I cherished like life itself, and the towel Commander Kai had given to me. The towel was still new, for I hadn't been able to bring myself to use it.

I was about to roll on the ground to extinguish the flames when the enemy planes again strafed us viciously. Bullets rained thickly all around. Comrade Kai calmly pressed his hand on my back. "Don't move," he said. "You'll only make the flames burn bigger." He ripped the burning piece from the tunic and shoved it into the sand.

I pulled out the badly scorched cloth and extracted the towel from the pocket. A bullet had torn it to shreds. Turning the towel this way and that, I gazed at it sorrowfully. Kai rose to his feet and waved the troops forward.

"Never mind about the towel," he said to me. "You're lucky you weren't hit!"

"You might have been hit yourself!" I cried.

"Me, hit? Impossible. Didn't you predict that after victory I would become a school teacher?" He laughed soundlessly.

An hour later, the battle of Sanchawan began in the outer perimeter of Yulin. I was in the brigade's command post, on a high sand dune to one side of the battlefield. I could see the enemy's positions and our own clearly. Enemy pillboxes dotted the flat sandy wastes. Comrade Kai led his battalion forward in an attack. The men were shadowy figures amid the flying sand and thick smoke. They destroyed five enemy pillboxes in a row and the enemy retreated. We pressed after them. The battle was going very favourably. The brigadier and brigade commissar were delighted.

Wanting to talk directly with Comrade Kai, whose battalion was spearheading the victorious assault, the brigadier picked up the field phone. But an enemy shell cut the line. The brigadier wrote out a commendation of the leaders and men of First Battalion and told the messenger to deliver it to Comrade Kai. I took the opportunity to go along with him.

A wild gale whirled yellow sand across the battlefield. The din of artillery was deafening. Trenches half a metre deep cut jagged clefts in the desert. As I leaped into one, Comrade Kai raced by and jumped into the same trench, but to my left, around a bend. Crouching, he made contact with a company command post over the field telephone. Straightening up and wiping the sweat from his forehead, he issued a few words of command to the company leader, then focussed his field glasses on the foremost assault squad.

"How brave our fighters are," he said. "The battle will soon be over. . . ."

Suddenly he crumpled. Some thought he had fainted. Some thought he was dodging a shell. A staff officer, a messenger, and several other comrades ran over to him. He sat with his head hanging forward on his chest, silent. I noticed a pool of blood beside him, and when we moved him we saw that it was gushing from his back. His face changed from ruddy to white, from white to waxen yellow. Without a word to his comrades in battle, he had abruptly left this world!

When the fighting ended, I sat on the broken masonry of a still smoking pillbox, staring dully at the yellow sands of the battlefield. And irrepressible sorrow welled up in my heart. "A small victory, but what a price we paid," I said to myself.

The sand beneath my feet was hot and a scorching sun blazed overhead, but I was unaware of them. I was weak and listless, crushed by the weight of the tragedy.

With leaden steps, I finally reached the compound where Comrade Li, the regimental chief of staff, was staying. The compound yard was full of prisoners. I pushed my way through and entered a small building. Comrade Li was working inside. He had been through thick and thin for years with Comrade Kai and the other men who had been killed that day. As you can imagine, their death was even more painful to him than to me. I wanted to speak to him, but he was so busy registering the prisoners, writing a battle report, directing the work of the other staff officers, that I had no opportunity. I sat on the edge of the platform bed, my head down, silently smoking one cigarette after another — although the smoke was giving me a splitting headache.

Comrade Li observed me sitting beside him. Still writing his report, he asked. "Are you tired, Old Tu? Orderly! Pour him a cup of boiled water."

I could no longer contain my misery, and I blurted, "Comrade Li, the commander and the political commissar of First Battalion have both been killed!"

He expelled a long breath. "I know," he said. Roughly, he rolled the sleeves of his shirt up above his elbows. Then, continuing to write his report with that red fountain pen, he called through the open window, "How many prisoners do we have altogether? Brigade just telephoned again. They want an exact figure!"

He picked up the phone and got one of his battalion commanders on the line. "Reorganize your unit, quickly. Get ready to continue the advance!"

After a long time, he again noticed me, sitting with my head low, my body racked by sobs. He placed both hands on my shoulders and shook me violently.

"What's the use of mourning? What good are tears? They've fallen. We, the living, must push on! That's what we mean by 'when the man in front goes down, the one behind takes his place!' " Again, putting his head through the window, he shouted, "Staff Officer Liu! That major general we captured — is his name Chang Hsiao-wu?"

Deeply moved, I gazed at Comrade Li, whose powerful body seemed to have ribs of steel and whose face wore a look of implacable determination. Compared with him, how weak I was. The revolution! Could a revolution be waged by the likes of me? Following this surge of emotion another thought swept into my mind: Our fighters are giving their lives to build a new life. They are writing history with their sweat and blood. Whereas I write only with my ineffectual pen....

I leaped up and ran from the room. I escorted prisoners under armed guard, I combed the battlefield for salvage, I sought all kinds of jobs to do — anything that could dull my sense of shame.

Our army then attacked the city of Yulin. But before we had taken it, we were ordered to withdraw and proceed to another objective. Day and night we marched, with scarcely ever a halt. One night as we were hurrying through the darkness, Comrade Li appeared at my side. Throwing an arm over my shoulder, he said as we walked together, "Keep your chin up. Learn how to convert sorrow into strength." I nodded. Before I had a chance to reply, he vaulted into the saddle and galloped away.

On August 20, 1947, the famous battle of Shachiatien commenced in northern Shensi Province. Our army advanced into the mountains in the teeth of a howling wind that brought with it black clouds and flickering lightning. Buffeted by the gale, our men clambered up the slopes laden with rifles, dismantled mortars and heavy machine-guns.

Again I saw Comrade Li. He jumped on a small mound near by and yelled to the men, "Speed it up! Faster!" Then he said a few words to a staff officer and hurried after the troops. The enemy held a commanding height. With several thousands of us crowded into a mountain gully, we were in a dangerous position.

But led by Comrade Li, after a fierce encounter, we drove the enemy back. Comrade Li and many other fighters gave their lives that day so that the tide of battle might be turned.

When I learned of his death, I didn't weep or speak. But I stood straight and motionless on the battlefield for a long time, while bullets flew all around. A terrible craving for revenge permeated every cell of my body. I vowed that I would become a fighting soldier....

After the battle, I returned to regimental headquarters. The misery that the cruel battle had temporarily pushed aside again flooded back into my heart. Ordinarily, when I put up here, I slept in the same room with the regimental commander, the two political commissars and the chief of staff. Orderlies always managed to find five doors from wrecked houses to serve as our beds.

This time I saw only four beds when I entered the cave dwelling. Chief of Staff Li's belongings were piled in a corner. The commanding officers neither washed their faces, nor drank any water, nor spoke. No one went near the pile of luggage in the corner.

I turned and went out again. Comrade Li's orderly was weeping in the courtyard, his hands covering his face. He said, "The chief of staff had only one old blanket. I wrapped him in it. See, this was his fountain pen."

"Don't cry!" I snapped. "Turn his pen in to the political department!"

A mule which Comrade Li sometimes rode stretched its neck high and neighed continuously by the compound wall. An old groom stood next to the mule, silently gazing up at the sky, swallowing his tears!

I arrived at brigade headquarters. Although we had won a victory, the brigadier was in a foul temper. The political commissar, his hands behind his back, was pacing the floor. At last, he turned sharply and said:

"Those who have tears can shed them! I've wept my eyes dry. The only tears I have left are tears of blood!"

The brigadier stared at him a moment, then savagely cranked the field phone. "Get ready to continue the battle!" he barked into the mouthpiece. "This is a command from headquarters: If you run out of grain, you can eat some of the horses!"

"Get ready to continue the battle!" The will and emotion of every man were compressed into these few words. Right! Let me go into battle with "when the man in front goes down, the one behind takes his place!" engraved for ever on my mind. Let me be like one of our cooks, who threw himself into the fray with only his spatula in his hand. Let me honestly and fully give myself over to a life of struggle for the Chinese people, who

have endured so many disasters and hardships, till the very last breath has left my body!

I could cite fifty, a hundred, such incidents – incidents that steeled me, tested me, changed and improved me, during my days with our fighting army. These, plus what I have absorbed with my mind and my emotions, plus my bettered and elevated spirit, I try to express through the characters in my writings. How can I help but set down on paper the things that are in my heart?

Some say a man takes up his pen and writes only because he wants to become an author. Can there really be such people in this world?

What is a road? It is trampled out in places where no road was, opened up in places overgrown with thorns and briars. There have been roads in the past, there will always be roads in the future as well.

Lu Hsun:
The Road of Life

LI CHI

Sanpien and Yumen to Me

I worked and lived in Sanpien* in North Shensi for three years before the victory of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and throughout nearly the whole period of the War of Liberation. I spent the first two years of the First Five-Year Plan in Yumen, the new oil base, formerly a desolate little town. To this day, I still go back to visit these two places from time to time because they are dearer to me than the village where I was born.

I never disguise my feelings for Sanpien and Yumen. When the first salvo at Tien An Men announced the establishment of our People's Republic, when I was in the Red Square listening to the Soviet people warmly cheering the great victory of our motherland, I thought of Sanpien and its people. In the past six or seven years, whenever I heard a report of victory, big or small, from the oil front, or whenever riding on the bus the pungent smell of oil reached my nostrils, I could not help thinking of Yumen. I am proud of Yumen and her oil industry for their contributions to our country. More than once, I called myself a "Yumen man" in my poems.

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*Li Chi is a well-known young poet. *Living at present in Yumen, a newly-opened oil base, he has written many outstanding poems about the life of the oil workers. Among his recent works are two long poems, *The Dragon Boat Festival in the Fifth Month* and *When My Brother Returns from the Red Army.*

* The name of a cluster of three towns — Anpien, Tingpien and Chingpien — near the Great Wall in North Shensi.

Sanpien and Yumen are to me a fountain of life. They are also the sources from which my poems sprang. I have written hundreds of short poems and a number of long poems in the past decade and nearly every one of them have something to do with these two places directly or indirectly. Most of my poems concern them directly, while a few which sing of the life of other districts are based on the life of Sanpien and Yumen. Once, in a letter to a comrade I wrote, "Away from Sanpien and Yumen I find it hard to write a single line." This may be slightly exaggerated, but it is nevertheless an honest confession. I have been criticized for the narrow scope of my writings. The criticism is well grounded. But what could I do? Maybe this is one aspect of my limitations.

I am a man without high creative ability. I lack the sensitivity which is indispensable to writers. I require a much longer time than other people to know and understand a thing. Cut off from the life of the people, I cannot write any poems. In the early years of liberation when for several years I worked in Wuhan and later when I worked in Peking I wrote very little. The little I did write, lacked colour and lustre. What's more I lack the confidence and courage to write about life I have just come into contact with. I did not start to write about the life of the Sanpien people before I had worked there for three whole years. As for my poems of Yumen these were penned only after I had been a "Yumen man" for nearly two years.

I heard long ago that if one wants to depict a certain person, he must turn into that kind of a man first. Of course this is going to extremes and is not to be believed absolutely. But from my relation to Sanpien and Yumen I have found that for a writer like me it is very important to love a place from the bottom of one's heart and to become a real native of the place. In the years I was in Sanpien, I was not working in the literary field. I was an ordinary village cadre in the eyes of others and in my own heart.

The situation was somewhat different when I went to Yumen, because by then I had become a professional literary worker. On the basis of my experience in Sanpien I did my best to forget that I was a writer and turned myself in all aspects (work, life, thoughts and feelings) into a "Yumen man" like everybody else in the district. This was of course difficult though not impossible.

After several months of endeavour, even those comrades who knew me very well could not refrain from giving me well-meant warnings like, "You are not at all like a writer. Careful you don't forget your own line!"

When you adopt such an attitude in daily life you are able to share the joys, sorrow, love and hate of the people around. People then treat you as one of them, like a bosom friend. They confide in you and open their hearts to you.

According to my experience in Sanpien and Yumen to this day I cannot agree with such sayings as, "Writing poems is different from writing novels. One does not need to live in a place for a long time. A passing glance gives one enough for song or poetry creation."

Actually the deeper the roots of the willow the richer is its foliage. How can a poplar be an exception? Away from Sanpien and Yumen, I cannot write poems. My poems lack something. The desert and millet of Sanpien, the Gobi and oil of Yumen are rooted deep in my heart. Whenever I have an opportunity, I go back there. I believe that they will always be an inexhaustible source of inspiration for my poems.

When I look back on my life and the path I have taken in creative writing during the past dozen years, I gaze in the direction of Sanpien and Yumen with a heart full of gratitude. With warm ardent hopes for the future, I think of them and congratulate them. Following in fast advancing footsteps of our motherland, I may build a new life in a new place. But never will I forget Sanpien and Yumen and their people. They made a writer out of me. The simplicity of the Sanpien shepherds and the straightforwardness of the Yumen oil workers can never be obliterated from my heart. Like my native accent, which can never be changed, my poems will always carry the accent of Sanpien and Yumen.

Chairman Mao with Visitors from Asian, African and Latin American Countries by Ho Po

PHOTOGRAPHS FROM THE THIRD NATIONAL EXHIBITION OF PHOTOGRAPHIC ART

Ducks

by Liu Kuang-hua and Li Tsu-huei

Master and Apprentice by Yang Fu-tao

Goldfish by Chen Po

Notes on Literature and Art

KUO HAN-CHENG

New Developments in the Traditional Chinese Theatre

In the autumn of 1942, when the College of Peking Opera was set up in Yenan, Chairman Mao wrote this inscription for it: "Weed through the old to let the new emerge!" This has remained our motto in dramatic reform, helping us to link the traditional theatre* closely with the life, thoughts and feelings of working people today. That is why the theatre has played an active part in inspiring and teaching the people during the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and the War of Liberation, as well as during the socialist revolution and socialist construction.

The liberation of the country as a whole confronted the classical drama with a new problem. It then became necessary to support all the rich variety of traditional plays and dramatic forms, so that they might develop and flower anew. Thus Chairman Mao

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* Traditional Chinese theatre or opera was the sole dramatic form for the Chinese stage up to some fifty years ago when new dramatic forms were introduced. It combines singing, acting, dialogue, dancing and sometimes acrobatics in one and has generally for themes historical and legendary stories. Hundreds of varieties of such theatre scattered all over the country.

formulated the directive: "Let a hundred flowers blossom!" This supplemented the old directive "Weed through the old to let the new emerge!" to make an integrated, comprehensive policy. The importance of the "Hundred Flowers" policy lies in the fact that it fosters diversified development of the classical theatre and encourages different schools to learn from each other in the course of free competition, in order that all may improve simultaneously and successfully "weed through the old to let the new emerge." This policy did much to stimulate free competition between different types of opera, different schools of acting, different styles and forms. Moreover it mobilized the talents of actors and folk artists in general, including those of outstanding attainments and great influence, and enlisted the help of scholars and experts whose special study was the drama, bringing a healthy activity to the classical theatre.

"Let a hundred flowers blossom. Weed through the old to let the new emerge!" This policy for dramatic reform put forward by the Central Committee of the Party and Chairman Mao was an application of Marxism-Leninism to a specific problem in the field of art. During the ten years since liberation, as this policy was put into practice and came to be fully understood by those concerned, it grew into a great force which guided the theatre rapidly forward and succeeded in effecting striking reforms. Its influence was incalculable. And when the effectiveness of this policy was seen, the Central Committee enlarged its scope, making it the policy for all cultural work, for literature as well as art.

The Chinese traditional theatre, born in a feudal society, now has a history of some eight hundred years. During these eight centuries, many actors performed mainly for the labouring people. Through the long years tens of thousands of plays were written, most of which gave a true picture of history and life, creating many outstanding characters including popular heroes and patriots, young men and women who fought stubbornly for freedom and a good life. While giving stirring expression to the people's aspirations and determination, the playwrights sharply exposed the traitors and villains who were against the common man, holding them up to ridicule or passing stern judgement on them. Thus the best of the old Chinese plays were a torch of justice held aloft in

the darkness, having a close affinity to the people and a strongly realist spirit, which made them an indispensable part of ordinary men and women's cultural life.

At the same time, during the long course of the drama's development, a very high artistic level was reached. In dramatic literature, the art of acting, singing, characterization and stage management, distinctive techniques and methods were evolved which were highly expressive and rich in national colour. This accounts for the wide and genuine popularity of the classical theatre among our people.

This is the main aspect of our traditional theatre. There is, of course, another. Growing up as it did in feudal society, the theatre could not but be influenced over the centuries by the views of the feudal ruling class, so that mingled with democratic ideas we find certain of the dregs of feudalism. This is true not only of *kunchu,* which was much influenced by the feudal literati. The plays and style of acting even of *pi-huang, pang-tzu, kao-chiang, hua-ku* and other types of opera which grew up in the villages often embody feudal superstitions or unhealthy emphasis on horror or sex. Naturally, these feudal dregs had a bad influence on audiences.

During the few decades before liberation, under the reactionary rule of the Kuomintang, these undesirable elements grew apace, particularly in the cities; while after China was invaded by Japanese imperialism, this rot spread even faster. In Peking, Shanghai and Wuhan in those days, as well as in the so-called "war-time capital" of Chungking, the theatres staged badly constructed plays lewdly or vulgarly acted. Good plays and good acting became rarer every day. Many companies broke up, not a few plays disappeared from the stage, and in some places the drama virtually ceased to exist. Such damage was inflicted on the classical theatre by the reactionary Kuomintang regime and the savagery of Japanese imperialism that, by the eve of the liberation of the whole mainland, the traditional drama was at its last gasp.

But inheriting this legacy, we had to set to work to "take it over and reform it," to build up our new socialist theatre. Under those circumstances, Chairman Mao's policy "Weed through the old to let the new emerge" was a torch lighting up our path.

This policy demanded that, confronted with this old tradition with its high ideological and artistic level tainted by dross and poison, we should criticize, adopt, reform and innovate. Criticism, adoption, reform and innovation are integral parts of one whole process, although in actual practice some steps come before others. They must not be mechanically separated, however.

The first step for us in dealing with our dramatic heritage is to understand and overhaul it, to get rid of its feudal dregs and absorb its fine democratic features, to differentiate between the decadent influence of the old feudal ruling class and the democratic and revolutionary elements created by the people of old. Only when we have done this can we properly speak of carrying forward the best in our traditional theatre. The considerable amount of overhauling already done – going over traditional plays, appraising the technique of outstanding actors, evaluating and improving traditional forms – are all part of the process of criticizing and carrying forward our dramatic tradition.

But criticizing and taking over are far from enough. On this foundation we must make reforms and produce something new. We must make reforms by using a correct standpoint and method, the experience of modern art and modern knowledge, to enrich the traditional theatre, to give it new life, new development in a new age, to link it closely with the thoughts and feelings of men today, with the artistic experience of the present, to see that the ancient is adapted for modern use and made to fit the needs of workers, peasants and soldiers in the age of socialism. We must not merely preserve our legacy, still less must we be slaves to it. To surpass our forbears and reflect the great new realities, we must make new creations of our own. But our new creations must not be cut off from the traditional base, for in that case they would exist in a vacuum as something nebulous and unreal. Our experience of dramatic reform during these ten years confirms the truth of this.

A good deal has been achieved in these ten years in dramatic reform. This is most apparent in the re-discovery and editing of traditional plays – an important task without which our other work could not go ahead. According to figures published in April 1957, more than 51,000 traditional plays had already been discovered in different parts of the country, of which over 14,000 had been transcribed and more than 4,200 re-edited. With the work done during the last two years, the figures now must exceed these numbers. This is no mean treasure we possess, for the great majority of these plays are the finest flower of the labouring people's wisdom down the centuries, which gives us an incomparably rich picture of life in ancient China as well as vivid, dynamic characters and a wealth of artistic experience. This not only provides a foundation for carrying forward and developing the traditional theatre, but is of value for the study of the life, thought and customs of old Chinese society. At present the traditional operas published include such different types as Peking, Szechuan, Hankow, Hunan, Puhsien, Liyuan, Shensi, Hopei and Honan clapper opera. In addition, following the publication of anthologies of Peking opera, *pingchu* opera and local operas from East China, different provinces and municipalities have published a large number of re-edited traditional local operas in collections or single volumes. The scope and far-reaching significance of the re-discovery and re-writing of the last ten years is incomparably greater than that done in the course of centuries by our predecessors, who published *Selected Yuan Plays, Rare Editions of Yuan and Ming Dramas, Dramas of the Ming Dynasty, Sixty Dramas, Ming and Ching Dramas* and other old collections.

But re-discovery and re-editing are merely one aspect of the work. In the theatre a considerable discrepancy often exists between the text of a play and its actual performance. A play may seem simple enough as a work of literature but, filled out and enriched by the actors' art, when staged it may prove highly significant, colourful and striking. That is why the re-discovery and re-editing of texts should always be accompanied by an exploration and overhauling of acting technique. Experience proves that the editing or re-writing of traditional plays is successful if at the same time importance is attached to the technique of acting. The reverse is equally true. Now dramatic colleges and opera groups throughout the country are studying hard and learning eagerly from experienced actors. We warmly welcome this trend, which should contribute much to carrying forward and developing our traditional stagecraft.

The study of histrionics is more today than one aspect of dramatic reform, having become a branch of research. Since liberation many of us have been constantly in the company of noted exponents of the Chinese stage, and have recorded their rich experience of many decades in the theatre. Typical works published are Mei Lan-fang's *Forty Years on the Stage,* the *Writings of Cheng Yen-chiu* and Kai Chiao Tien's *My Experience on the Stage.* These books give a preliminary account of the experience of these great actors in carrying forward and adding to the art of acting. They have an important role in the development and improvement of our theatre.

Following our search for different plays and styles of acting, many operas which had virtually died out under the Kuomintang and Japanese imperialism have been revived. Instances are the Hopei clapper opera and the North Shansi clapper opera. Moreover, supported by the Party and the Government, various old types of local drama have come back to life – *kunchu,* Anhwei, Yiyang and Chinyang opera. There are now over three hundred different kinds of local drama in China, including several which have been resurrected to make their contribution to the richness and variety of the Chinese theatre.

Thanks to these efforts, many fine traditional plays have been re-staged after re-editing. Well over a hundred first-rate plays have appeared since the Peking opera *The White Snake,* the Shaohsing opera *The Butterfly Lovers* and the Szechuan opera *Love Under the Willows* won prizes at the First All-China Opera Festival, and since the production of the *kunchu* opera *Fifteen Strings of Cash* and the Shensi opera *The Orphan of the Chao Family.* These revised plays are far superior to their originals, in content as well as form. They give powerful expression to our national theatre's strong affinity to the people and its high synthesis of realism and romanticism. In fact, the appearance of each fine play is a concrete example of "weeding through the old to let the new emerge." These plays carry forward our tradition, but enrich it with modern artistic experience, bringing it closer to the thoughts, feelings and artistic demands of modern audiences. Popular today, they also have lasting value. This triumph in the history of our theatre, which should be amply recorded, also has significance for world art. For these plays are not only a part of

our cultural treasure but a contribution to world literature too. And no doubt they will continue to be developed in the theatre of the future.

During the last ten years, the implementation of the policy of "Weed through the old to let the new emerge" has resulted in great successes not only in re-editing traditional operas but in the writing of new operas with historical and modern themes. As far back as during the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and the War of Liberation, playwrights in the old liberated areas wrote new historical operas like *Forced to Join the Liangshan Brigands, Three Attacks on the Chu Manor House, Li Tzu-cheng Enters the Capital* and *The Red Maid.* These differed from the old historical operas in revaluating history from the historical-materialist viewpoint and in giving a truthful and artistic reflection of it on the stage. These operas dealt sympathetically with the peasant revolts which shook the foundations of feudal society; they sang the heroes of these revolts, described the courage and skill with which the peasants defeated the landlords' forces, and, of course, presented their failure and the reasons for it. After coming to the cities these operas were welcomed by a wider public and exerted a great influence on the Chinese theatre. Many groups performed these new historical operas and produced new ones of their own, including such hits as *Wild Boar Forest* and *The Tiger Hunters.* These dramas widened the range of history depicted, enabled audiences to see more clearly the true nature of historical events, and made many experiments in stage technique.

Examples of dramas on contemporary themes are not lacking in the history of the traditional theatre; but it was in the old revolutionary bases that traditional dramas were used for the first time to portray workers, peasants and soldiers in the new democratic revolution, the socialist revolution and socialist construction. After liberation, many more such dramas on modern themes were written.

It is our aim to use the Marxist theory of aesthetics to combine the experience of traditional and modern art in order to reflect our great age and create splendid heroes and heroines, educating our people with socialist and communist ideas. This is an im-

portant aspect of "weeding through the old to let the new emerge," consistently advocated by the Party.

In the last ten years, by dint of hard unremitting work, we have produced a number of traditional style operas with modern themes which hold their own on the stage. Shortly after liberation there appeared *Small Son-in-law* and *The Lohan Coin*. 1958 saw the production of several dozen new operas including *Liu Hu-lan, The White-haired Girl, Sanliwan, A Spark of Fire, Waves of the Whangpoo, Red Pine Forest and Sow-Thistle*. The scope of these dramas was extremely wide, for virtually all the chief aspects of the Chinese revolution from the May the Fourth Movement of 1919 were dealt with from different angles. The main theme of new traditional operas just after the liberation was the struggle for freedom in marriage; but by the time of the Big Leap our playwrights and actors between them had produced operas about the heroes fighting for the proletarian revolution and the younger generation battling to build socialism. This fact alone reveals the broadening scope of the traditional drama reflecting modern life. At the same time, owing to the steady accumulation of stage experience, the integration of content and form improved. Thus last year both Peking opera and *kunchu* opera – old forms with relatively rigid conventions – successfully staged modern dramas. Of course, some problems still remain unsolved in the writing of traditional dramas on modern themes, including the problem of the contradiction between the form and the content. To solve this problem experiments have been made all over the country on the base of tradition: new tunes have been introduced, new ways of singing, gestures, characters and different types of stage settings. These have enriched and developed Chinese stagecraft and amassed valuable experience for us. These experiments inevitably comprised some failures. The mechanical adoption of the methods of expression of Western-style plays and operas was one of these. More time and effort are still needed to solve these problems completely. In particular, we must make a study of our traditional stagecraft, for only by understanding its rules can we thoroughly master them and go on to develop them and introduce innovations. Our great dramatic heritage contains a wealth of artistic experience and stage technique which await further exploration and study.

Problems have not ceased to crop up in the work of dramatic reform since liberation. Some of these have already been solved, others await solution. Thus there was at first some doubt about the necessity and utility of taking over the dramatic heritage. Ten years of experience, however, have dispelled these doubts by the outstanding achievements in dramatic reform. The problem today is not whether we should take over the traditional theatre, but how. Taking over calls for the exercise of discrimination. In other words, we must analyse our heritage, accept what is best in it and discard the dross. Here we come to the question of criteria. In judging a specific play, what is good and what is bad? Unless we are clear on this, we shall grow confused and be guilty of bias.

The power of art to instruct can be summed up as its ability to deepen our understanding, to inspire us, and to teach us to love beauty. The traditional Chinese theatre helps us to understand the life and people of ancient times. Many plays give profound exposures of the social contradictions in history, they embody the people's wisdom in their struggle and their philosophy, thereby deepening our understanding of life. Moreover, the patriotism and democratic spirit of many traditional plays, as well as our forefathers' perseverance in their search for a better life, still have power today to move and inspire us, encouraging us to work harder for our present and future happiness. In addition, although some traditional plays have no serious message, they serve a good purpose because they are healthy in tone and provide innocent amusement and pleasure. In brief, to distinguish between the good and the bad in the traditional theatre, we must judge whether or not a play is of benefit to audiences today. This is our principal criterion. We have gradually clarified our ideas on this point as the result of ten years' experience in dramatic reform and after many debates in which we opposed both a return to the past and any vulgarization of Marxism.

Naturally, in judging a play's merits and usefulness, the main criterion must be the political or ideological one. At the same time we must not overlook the artistic criteria, including those technical points of stagecraft which are useful to us. Though the ideas in a number of the traditional plays are not conspicuously of the people, they are either innocuous or relatively harmless

and easy to modify, and technically speaking these plays have much worth studying. The two scenes "Lodging a Complaint" and "Family Reunion" in the Peking opera *Selling a Horse* can hardly be said to express the aspirations of the common man; but the play is brilliantly constructed. Similarly, the singing and music in another Peking opera, *Two Entries to the Palace*, well repay study, though the opera's ideological content is by no means profound. Plays of this kind are useful to us. To develop our new theatre, we must make a careful study of our traditional stagecraft, acting and singing. These technical skills are the fruit of long and patient work on the part of our ancestors and we should give them serious attention.

Other problems also arise in connection with reforming old plays and making innovations. The policy of "Weed through the old to let the new emerge" requires that on the basis of a mastery of the traditional stagecraft we use modern knowledge and new artistic experience to enrich and develop tradition. This involves a series of struggles. Some leftists attacked the reform of old plays and making innovations on the grounds that the contradictions between form and content were absolute, denying that the traditional drama could depict modern life or the heroes of today, and urging us to break with tradition, to make a fresh start and "create" a "new theatre." In practice, of course, this cavalier treatment of tradition will not work – indeed, the masses are opposed to it. These leftists ignored our people's habits and tastes, and failed to understand that although the old theatre was part of the old superstructure and must change in accordance with changes in the base, a distinctive feature of such changes is that the theatre cannot cut itself off from tradition, an unbroken tradition dating back many centuries. You can find no case in the history of the Chinese theatre of a complete break with past traditions owing to any political change. On the contrary, the development of the theatre shows the most stubborn continuity. In the field of art, moreover, development is rapid if we carry forward tradition, but slow if we discard tradition.

Some rightists opposed reforming old plays and making innovations because they wanted to keep the feudal theatre unchanged. They believed that everything in our dramatic heritage was good, that nothing must be touched, that any alteration would be a mistake. They failed to understand that the theatre is not an old poem or painting. When we read a poem by Li Po or Tu Fu today, we may approach it from our new standpoint to draw fresh inspiration from it, but we would not dream of casually altering a line or even a word. Similarly, when enjoying Han Huang's *A Painting of Five Oxen* and Ku Hung-chung's *An Evening Party*, we can study the craftsmanship by which these great masters conveyed the beauty of Nature and human life, but we would never consider making the slightest alteration to these paintings. The theatre is in a different category, however. It lives among the people, its whole existence is bound up with the stage, and both its content and form never cease to change and develop according to the new requirements of its audiences. The history of the Chinese theatre during the last eight centuries provides strong proof of this. Since the drama lives among the people, only constant changes and innovations can make it flourish; failing this, it is bound to decline. The history of *kunchu* affords an excellent example of this. When *kunchu*, which came from the people, left the rich soil which had nourished it to become an entertainment for the feudal literati in their leisure hours, it began to stand still and deteriorate. In an essay entitled *Watching the Flowers in Changan*, written in the reign of Tao Kuang (1821-1851), we find this revealing passage:

". . . When vulgar, low-class *erh-huang* and clapper tunes are played, loud cheers sound under the stage. But when *kunchu* is sung in a tea-house the audience seated upstairs and downstairs is as scattered as the stars in the morning sky. When scholars gather to drink wine and hear girl-singers, they listen quietly and smile, nodding their heads. How different from the din and bustle of a Peking opera!"

Although the feudal scholar who wrote this had the highest regard for the exclusiveness of an audience as "scattered as the stars in the morning sky," he could not ignore the attitude of the general public, and in the end could not help lamenting the fact that *kunchu* had become an art for the few. The decline of *kunchu* was due not to any intrinsic defect, but to the "support" of the feudal literati.

It is most significant that *kunchu*, which was declining by the middle of the Ching dynasty, should suddenly come to life again

in New China with a revised version of *Fifteen Strings of Cash*. This was no accident. It was not *Fifteen Strings of Cash* that saved this old form of opera, but the policy "Weed through the old to let the new emerge." This policy pointed out the road to new life for *kunchu* and helped it to find the source of fresh vitality.

While carrying out this policy we had to combat anti-historicism. Those who flouted historical truth believed that they were weeding through the old to create the new, but this had nothing in common with the Party policy. Whereas they advocated "borrowing from the ancients to instruct the moderns," in fact they simply confounded old and new. They distorted facts and re-wrote history completely, putting modern ideas into the heads of the ancients, forcing them to talk our modern language and use modern viewpoints to consider and solve problems. This was thoroughly ludicrous. Comrade Chou Yang said of them: "They cannot differentiate between using the ideas of the modern proletariat to observe and describe history, and describing men of old as workers of today. But these two things are utterly different." This is a valid criticism of this anti-historical trend. This trend is not Marxist but poses as Marxism to give a distorted picture of history in works of art; it also breaks the laws of reality and purveys not truth but falsehood. It has nothing in common with the policy "Weed through the old to let the new emerge." On the contrary, there is a fundamental difference.

In the last ten years we have accumulated considerable experience in dramatic reform, and I have dealt briefly with some of the chief aspects of the policy "Weed through the old to let the new emerge." In future, we must draw the necessary conclusions from our experience and resolutely go a step further in carrying out the Party policy: "Let a hundred flowers blossom. Weed through the old to let the new emerge."

Despite our achievements, much remains to be done. We must make a far more intensive study of the laws of stagecraft. We cannot bring about great improvements in our work until we have drawn theoretical conclusions from our rich practical experience. If we want to study more intensively and on a wider scale, many tasks await us. First, we must do our utmost to collect material, especially on stage experience: great actors' interpretations of different roles, singing, dramatic training. All this must be amassed and studied systematically. This is our most urgent task and one that we are ready to undertake. We should also pay attention to earlier studies of the theatre, reconsidering these in the light of modern knowledge. There is no lack of experience to be gleaned from the history of the traditional theatre, the study of dramatic theory and stagecraft, acting and directing, singing and music, stage settings and so forth. There is no lack either of materials which will repay study. We simply have to work hard to explore and study them. New dramatic theory in China and new aesthetics of the theatre can be built up only on the base of past experience critically assimilated. And our dramatic critics must also be familiar with our traditional dramatic criticism, adopting what is rational in it, weeding through the old to let the new emerge. Once we have made all past experience our own and introduced bold innovations, I am confident that the rich soil of our traditional drama will produce new playwrights of the calibre of Kuan Han-ching* and Tang Hsien-tsu.**

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* Famous Yuan dynasty playwright of the thirteenth century.

** Famous Ming dynasty dramatist of the late sixteenth century who wrote *The Peony Pavilion*, an excerpt of which is published on p. 43 of this issue.

Book Review

CHEN MO

With Chairman Mao

"We say that the Long March is the first of its kind ever recorded in history, that it is a manifesto, an agitation corps and a seeding-machine. Since P'an Ku divided heaven from earth and the Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors reigned, has there ever been in history a long march like ours? . . ." This was Chairman Mao Tse-tung's estimate of the Long March in his article "On the Tactics of Fighting Japanese Imperialism" written in 1935. Now, more than twenty years later, hundreds of millions of our people are eager to read about the countless heroic episodes of the Long March. So when Chen Chang-feng's book *With Chairman Mao on the Long March* was published, it immediately received a warm welcome from readers.

Chen Chang-feng is now a colonel in the People's Liberation Army. In 1930 when he was only sixteen, he had the good fortune to work beside Chairman Mao, remaining with him for six years. This book contains his reminiscences of that period. Divided into ten chapters, it gives simple, vivid and intimate descriptions of Chairman Mao during the Long March.

Here are glimpses of a great revolutionary leader seen through the eyes of a young Red Army soldier. Sixteen-year-old Chen Chang-feng was Chairman Mao's orderly, but to say that he looked after Chairman Mao is less accurate than saying that Chairman

Chen Mo is a young critic.

Mao watched over this young soldier with fatherly care. At night when the Chairman was reading or writing and young Chen fell asleep over the table, Chairman Mao would wake him with a smile and send him to bed. When this lad fresh from a small village asked Chairman Mao what a post-office was, the Chairman wrote his first letter home for him. During a snowstorm on the Liupan Mountain, Chen fainted with cold and Chairman Mao, afraid he had malaria, covered the lad with his own coat, leaving himself nothing but a thin jacket against the piercing wind. While crossing the marshland Chen fell into a swamp, but was rescued by the Chairman's strong arms. . . . Such episodes as these bring Chairman Mao's sturdy and kindly figure before our eyes.

The Long March was a crucial stage in the history of the Chinese revolution, and Chairman Mao in person directed this struggle which was to decide the fate of China. But his young orderly could not at the time understand the historic task shouldered by this great revolutionary leader. Thus after crossing the Gold Sand River,* since Chairman Mao was very tired, instead of preparing a desk as soon as they camped, Chen first made up a bed and boiled some water. This was the occasion for Chen, who had seldom been criticized by Chairman Mao, to receive a serious but gentle reprimand. "The important thing now is work: eating and drinking are only secondary. Over twenty thousand comrades are still waiting on the other side of the river." And the Chairman concluded: "I must punish you for this!" He punished Chen by forbidding him to sleep that day, but making him sit beside him to work. Of this "punishment" Chen recalls: "I had the bad habit of sleeping at all hours. When the Chairman was working and I was sitting beside him I often started nodding. I knew, too, that when the Chairman said he would punish me by not letting me sleep, this was a joke. But when I saw how hard he worked, I stopped feeling drowsy. And when Chairman Mao looked at me from time to time with a smile, I felt thoroughly ashamed. Later I went out to fetch some boiled water and poured out a cup for him before sitting down again. After the

* In April 1935, when the Red Army reached this river between Szechuan and Yunnan, it was pursued by more than a hundred thousand of the enemy. The crossing of the river was of decisive significance.

time it would take for two meals, the Chairman stood up and said to me: 'You've been with me now for several years: don't you understand that work must always come first? In future, never mind where we are, the most important thing is to prepare somewhere to work; then, if you have time, you can think of food and rest. Remember, not only now but in the future as well, the main thing for us is work.' "

This last injunction is the advice of a great revolutionary leader to all those working for the revolution.

The course of the Long March passed through eleven provinces. No matter how hard conditions were, Chairman Mao's first thought was for the local people; he insisted that the Red Army should observe strict discipline and show consideration for the people in order to win their love and support. His own frugality and industry were an example to all around him. When the Red Army entered a region inhabited by the Miao minority people, Chairman Mao was thin and tired after intensive campaigning and inadequate food. His orderlies discovered a pond full of carp near his lodgings, and exalted at the prospect of catching fish; but remembering their army discipline they first asked the Chairman's permission. They were told that these carp must be kept for some special purpose by the Miaos, and they must neither take them nor attempt to buy them. So Chairman Mao went on having the most simple meals.

Before the Red Army entered the district where lived the little-known Yi people, Chen heard from an old man that the Yis attacked all Hans on sight. He took this problem to Chairman Mao, who told him: "The Yis suffered bitterly at the hands of the White forces, and so they hate them. But they will feel quite differently towards us. We respect them, and look on them as brothers. We shall unite with them against the oppression of the White forces." So it happened that in the home of the Yis Chen witnessed a most moving scene of welcome. The hill-top and the whole hill-side were black with people, who raised both hands, knelt down, sang for joy and cheered. . . .

Many moving anecdotes about those days reveal how deeply the minority peoples loved the Red Army. It was under the guidance of Chairman Mao that the nationality policy was correctly

carried out among these minority peoples, enabling our multi-national state to become firmly united as one big family.

The Long March was one of the most arduous stages in the history of the Chinese revolution; yet the descriptions in this book convey to us the revolutionary optimism of Chairman Mao, the optimism shown in his poem on the Long March:

> The Red Army fears not the trials of a distant march;
> To them a thousand mountains, ten thousand rivers are nothing.

Chen describes the scene on a great snow-covered mountain, untrodden by men. "Chairman Mao was standing at the top, his feet imbedded in deep snow, looking back at the comrades who were still toiling up. They advanced like a long winding serpent, and the Chairman stood there waving to them. . . ."

Elsewhere the writer says: "In the boundless grassland, stretching to the far horizon, Chairman Mao walked ahead; but every few steps he would pause to turn back, calling our names, and not until we answered would he walk on again."

Here we seem to see the great figure who, in the long and arduous course of China's revolution, has led the Chinese people forward to climb one peak of endeavour after another.

This book is written in straightforward, convincing language, and the narrative moves at a lively pace. Readers cannot but feel the writer's sincere love and admiration for the subject of these reminiscences.

Another book dealing with Chairman Mao is Chiang Chin-feng's *By the Side of Chairman Mao*. Here are episodes taken from Chairman Mao's life in Yenan during the ten years between 1938 and 1948. At that time the author was one of the guards assigned to the Central Committee of the Party. After the outbreak of the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression, Yenan became the world-famed centre of revolution for the people of all China, the headquarters of the resistance, the rear of the Eighth Route and the New Fourth Army. During this period Chairman Mao from his loess cave in Yenan directed the revolutionary struggle of the Chinese people.

This book tells us how Chairman Mao played his part in bringing waste land under cultivation. He tilled a plot of waste land

near his cave, using his spare time each day to hoe or plant vegetables. When the guards offered to help he refused, saying: "This is the call of the Central Committee, the decision of the Border Government. Of course I must do my part."

The anecdotes in this book help us to see the close ties between Chairman Mao and the people of Yenan. While Chairman Mao was at a meeting once, an old peasant named Wu insisted on making over his own cave, which was a clean and bright one, to the Chairman. Again, when Chairman Mao learned in a casual conversation that some old men who were his neighbours were about to have birthdays, he prepared wine and dishes to celebrate with them, moving the old men to tears! The people of Yenan had a deep love for their leader; thus an old man named Chen, who was caught by the enemy, chose to die rather than disclose the whereabouts of Chairman Mao and the Central Committee. In August 1945, when in order to avert civil war Chairman Mao decided to go to Chungking to negotiate with the Kuomintang government, great concern was shown by the people of Yenan, who kept sending delegates to the Central Committee of the Party to urge Chairman Mao not to go. When he returned from Chungking safe and sound, the people's relief was so great that they cheered him wildly.

Some lively episodes reveal Chairman Mao's brilliance as a strategist. During the War of Liberation, when Chiang Kai-shek sent his general Hu Tsung-nan with more than 200,000 troops against the Border Regions, Chairman Mao resisted the enemy in North Shensi with the help of the people and four and a half companies of guards. Sometimes the Kuomintang troops were no more than a few dozen miles away, but thanks to the correct tactics of the Central Committee and Chairman Mao, the enemy lost all initiative and was finally wiped out. Graphic touches depict for us Chairman Mao's calmness and never-failing sense of humour during the fighting. Once a bomb fell near his quarters, and someone took a large piece of shrapnel to show him. With his usual smile, the Chairman weighed it in his hand and commented: "Splendid! This will provide us with two kitchen choppers."

This book also records stories about Chairman Mao's comrades-in-arms Liu Shao-chi and Chou En-lai. Here is one example.

During the most critical juncture of a battle, since one stretcher-bearer was ill, Chou En-lai helped to carry the wounded. The man on his stretcher recognized Chou En-lai's voice, but could not believe his ears and asked repeatedly who this was carrying him. When later he was told that it was Chou En-lai, he sat up and shed tears. "So it was Vice-Chairman Chou! Heavens!" He insisted on being sent back to the front. These brief anecdotes truthfully reflect the solidarity between the comrades in the revolutionary ranks who are fighting for a common cause. This revolutionary comradeship and faith bind our leaders and the rank and file closely together.

With Chairman Mao on the Long March and *By the Side of Chairman Mao* both use short anecdotes to describe Chairman Mao's daily life. Recently many other works by veteran revolutionaries have appeared, recalling the past struggles from different angles. Indeed, reminiscences of this type have become a most popular form of literature in China.

Chronicle

Writers and Artists Celebrate the October Revolution

On November 1, 1959, more than eight hundred workers, writers, artists and others in Peking attended a meeting at which Keh Pao-chuan, vice-secretary general of the Sino-Soviet Friendship Association, spoke on "The Ties Between Chinese and Soviet Literature," and the poet Emi Siao recited his *Three Odes to the Red Rocket.* Poems on Sino-Soviet friendship by the Soviet poets Tikhonov and Surkov were also recited. The Soviet film *The Volunteers* was shown.

On November 6, many writers and artists were among those who participated in Peking's big rally to celebrate the anniversary of the October Revolution in the newly-built Great Hall of the People. The Bolshoi Ballet, just back from a tour of other cities in China, gave a magnificent performance which included *Les Sylphides, Walpurgis-nacht* and excerpts from *The Sleeping Beauty, Swan Lake* and *The Stone Flower.* The Soviet artists also performed *Carrying-Poles,* a Chinese folk dance. A special round of applause was given to the dance performed by a mixed group of Soviet dancers and two members of the Concert Group of the Chinese Air Force. Chou En-lai, Chu Teh, Tung Pi-wu, Lin Po-chu, Peng Chen and other leaders of the People's Government and Communist Party, as well as the Soviet ambassador were in the audience. After the performance they went on stage to warmly congratulate the dancers, musicians and the conductor of the orchestra Yuri Faier on their performance.

Peking's writers and artists attended various other "October" celebrations. The Chinese Artists' Association and the Central Institute of Fine Arts opened an Exhibition of Soviet Graphic Art; the Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, the Ministry of Culture and the Sino-Soviet Friendship Association jointly sponsored an exhibition of applied and folk art of the various nationalities of the Soviet Union, that gave a particularly strong showing of the latest achievements in Soviet industrial art. The Central Conservatory of Music gave a performance in the Sino-Soviet Friendship Hall of works by Tchaikovsky and Rubinstein. The Central Pilharmonic Symphony Orchestra, which performed

Tchaikovsky's *Fifth Symphony* and Shostakovich's *Eleventh Symphony,* gave another concert of vocal music including the *Song of Lenin* and the final chorus from the opera *Pugachov.* The Chinese Liberation Army's Repertory Theatre staged Konstantin Simonov's well-known play *The Russians,* while the Chinese Children's Theatre presented the Soviet play *The Young Guards.* There were exhibitions of photographs showing construction in the Soviet Union and illustrating Sino-Soviet friendship, in cultural halls, parks and street corner show-cases in the capital.

From November 6 onwards, twenty-nine cities in China held a Soviet Film Week, showing *Poem of the Sea, In the Days of October, I Knew Him Personally, The Volunteers, The Young Years, A Man's Fate, The Girl from Kiev* and *The Call of the Sky,* as well as five new cartoon films. Celebrations in other parts of China included recitals of Soviet poetry, lectures, dances and exhibitions.

Euclides da Cunha Commemorated

The fiftieth anniversary of the death of the great Brazilian writer Euclides da Cunha was commemorated in Peking on October 27, 1959, at a meeting held under the auspices of the Chinese People's Committee for World Peace, the Chinese People's Association for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, the All-China Federation of Literary and Art Circles and the Chinese Writers' Union. The meeting was attended by more than 1,300 people, including such well-known cultural figures as Kuo Mo-jo, Chu Tu-nan, Mao Tun, Yang Han-sheng and Shao Chuan-lin. Among the distinguished visitors present were: Henrique Fialho, vice-president of the International Association of Democratic Lawyers; Branco Fialho, vice-president of the Women's International Democratic Federation and president of the Federation of Brazilian Women; Jośe Geraldo Vieira, Brazilian author and member of the Sao Paulo College of Art; Maria de Lourdes Texeira, a Brazilian writer; James Endicott, member of the presidium of the World Peace Council and chairman of the Canadian Peace Congress, and his wife; cultural delegations from Brazil, Cuba, Chile, Argentina, Uraguay and Peru; and delegates from Haiti, Paraguay, Nicaragua and Colombia.

The chair was taken by Chu Tu-nan, president of the Chinese People's Association for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries. Chou Erh-fu, member of the Executive Committee of the Chinese Writers' Union and secretary general of the Chinese People's Associa-

tion for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, made a speech entitled "The Genius of Latin America." José Geraldo Vieira and James Endicott also spoke at the meeting.

Euclides da Cunha's masterpiece, *The Backlands*, has recently been translated into Chinese and published by the People's Literature Publishing House, Peking.

Fourth National Exhibition of Graphic Art

The Fourth National Exhibition of Graphic Art organized by the Chinese Artists' Association opened on October 1 in Chungking and on October 15, 1959, in Peking. On display were 291 works of art by 199 artists selected from more than 1,200 entries from all parts of the country. These included work by new artists, by members of the national minorities, and by amateur artists from among the workers, peasants and soldiers. The range of subject matter was wider than previously, reflecting the new atmosphere and enthusiasm of the Chinese people since the Big Leap of 1958. Some of the best features of traditional painting have been successfully assimilated in these lithographs, woodcuts, etchings and scissor-cuts. Since visiting Chungking and Peking, this exhibition has made the round of other cities.

New Translations of German Literature

To celebrate the tenth anniversary of the German Democratic Republic, in October 1959 the People's Literature Publishing House in Peking published eight works by German writers including the *Selected Works of Bertolt Brecht* which contains Brecht's best poems and the three plays *Die Gewehre der Frau Carrar, Mutter Courage* and *Herr Puntila und sein Knecht Matti, Selected Short Stories by Modern German Writers* including work by Anna Seghers, Stephan Hermlin, Willi Bredel, Eduard Claudius, Carl Mundstock and Franz Fühmann, Johannes R. Becher's *Winter Schlacht, The Plays of Friedrich Wolf,* Lion Feuchtwanger's *Goya,* Stefan Heym's *Goldsborough,* the *Nibelungenlied* and a new translation of *Grimm's Fairy Tales.*

Third National Exhibition of Photographic Art

The Third National Exhibition of Photographic Art was held in Peking in October last year at the Summer Palace. On display

were 503 exhibits by 277 photographers. Most of the exhibits dated from between the end of 1958 and July 1959. They gave truthful and vivid reflection to the people's enthusiasm in socialist construction under the leadership of the Communist Party and the new revolutionary spirit of the peasants since the establishment of people's communes. There were also more photographs of natural scenery, flowers and other subjects than at the two previous exhibitions. The increase in coloured photographs was marked. Both in richness of theme and in technical proficiency the exhibition showed a great advance. Some of the exhibits were sent in by photographers from Hongkong and Macao and by overseas Chinese.

Exhibition of Burmese Frescoes in Peking

In the second half of October last year an exhibition of the Pugan frescoes was shown in Chingshan Park, Peking. The exhibition was organized by the Ministry of Culture and the Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries. Pugan, a cultural, religious and political centre in Burma as far back as the ninth century, remains a place of pilgrimage even today.. Shen Yen-ping, Chinese Minister of Culture, spoke at the opening ceremony, paying tribute to these precious relics of Burmese art and wishing the exhibition every success. Also present at the opening ceremony were U Chit Thaung, Burmese Minister of Culture, members of the Burmese Cultural and Goodwill Delegation, and Kyaw Win, Burmese Ambassador to China. U Chit Thaung presented to the Chinese Ministry of Culture a set of pictures of Burmese musicians and dancers.

Important Peking Man Fossil Found

Recently Chinese scientists in Choukoutien, where the Peking Man was discovered, found a fairly complete adult jaw-bone of Peking Man, as well as numerous fossils of mammals and stone implements used by Peking Man. This excavation by the Institute of Ancient Vertebrates of the Chinese Academy of Sciences began in June 1959. This jaw-bone, judging by its shape, the clear corrosion of the teeth and the recession of gums with age, belonged to an elderly female. The lower jaw-bone is more complete than any discovered so far. During the past thirty years eleven fragments of jaw-bones have been discovered, none of them so complete as this specimen. This discovery supplies important material for our study of Peking Man.

Relics of an Ancient Kingdom

Nearly two thousand years ago there was a kingdom in Southwest China known as Tien. Between 1955 and 1958 the Yunnan Provincial Museum excavated more than four thousand cultural relics of this old kingdom from tombs in Tsinning County. Some of these relics, including a golden seal used by the king, have been brought from Kunming to Peking and exhibited in the new National Historical Museum. There are bronze weapons and implements, ornaments made of agate and turquoise, bronze statues of human figures and vessels containing cowries. The two largest bronze figures of a man and a woman measure more than forty centimetres in height. The clothes of this couple fasten in the middle, and they are kneeling, holding staffs. Two vessels containing cowries have lids thirty centimetres in diameter, showing scenes in relief. One lid shows what is evidently a weaving shed. The mistress sits in the middle supervising her slaves as they weave. Six women with bent heads are sitting weaving on the ground around her, while two others are spinning thread. On her left is a table with cloth on it, watched by another figure. On her right a slave holds up a length of cloth for her inspection, while another slave stands by respectfully waiting for orders. Three other slaves are holding plates of food and a fourth, who carries a stick, is in attendance on her. The other lid depicts an even more elaborate scene with more than a hundred and twenty figures. On a raised platform sits a man with two rows of seated men beside him. There are sixteen bronze drums on the platform, which has a staircase on one side up which slaves are hurrying to serve food. On the left side under the platform men are killing an ox, pig and sheep to be boiled in a large cauldron; on the right some men are sporting with a tiger and feeding a peacock with a snake. Musicians are playing musical instruments. Three men on horseback are riding on a tour of inspection. The outer rim of the lid shows many women seated on the ground with plates in their hands. There is also a pillar about which serpents have coiled, and another object to which a man is fastened. Other figures are engaged in buying and selling. These relics show the skill of the ancient Tien people in casting bronze, and the scenes portrayed give us a glimpse of their slave society.

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